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Thesis

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE BOOK OF MICAH

by

Albert Longwell Slack

(A.B., Ohio Wesleyan University, 1932)

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INTRODUCTION

The problem which we have set for ourselves in this thesis is "The Interpretation of the Book of Micah." The problem will be approached in two ways: firstly, a critical study of the book, including the questions of date, authorship, divisions, the interpretation of the verses, and something of the life and times of Micah will be presented; secondly, the message of Micah as it is revealed in his writings will be given. The latter section will include Micah's conviction of his call to be a prophet, his condemnation of the false prophets, his message to the people of Israel concerning religion, justice, and God.

The study of this book is important to the man who is interested in the Old Testament and in the prophets. The importance of the study of this book is also seen as one realizes that Micah spoke some of the eternal principles of religion that were characteristic of the prophets. The understanding of the prophet Micah is also important for today since the ideas which he taught are still fresh and vital.

Since Micah is one of the "minor prophets" there is not an abundance of material from which to draw. However a very thorough treatment of this prophet and his writings is given by J. M. P. Smith in The International Critical Commentary and by G. W. Wade in the Westminster Commentary, both of which have proven to be very helpful in the writing of this thesis. Other commentaries which the writer found to be useful are: Cambridge Bible (T. K. Cheyne), and The New Century Bible (R. F. Horton). The other books which proved to

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be of value are S. R. Driver's Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament, Dr. E. Sellin's Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament, Frederick Eiselen's Prophetic Books of the Old Testament (Vol. II), and C. F. Kent's Social Teachings of the prophets and Jesus. These were especially useful but the writer is indebted to all of the authors listed in the bibliography.

PART I

A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE BOOK OF MICAH

CHAPTER I

MICAH, THE MAN

Little is known of the man, Micah. Our sources are limited to the parts of the Book of Micah that came from the hand of Micah and the reference to him in Jeremiah 26:18. The name Micah is a shortened form of Micaiah (Jer. 26:18) which means "Who is like Jawheh." This was a very common name among the Hebrews. The possession of the name does not mean, however, that there was any special religious fervor on the part of parents or the family of the bearer. Names containing the name of the deity were very common in the Hebrew and the whole Semitic world.

Micah was the youngest of that remarkable group of prophets that filled the period from Uzziah to Hezekiah. He came from a small town, Moresheth, in the Maritime plain near Gath (1:1 & 14). Consequently he is called Micah, the Morashtite to distinguish him from Micaiah son of Imlah. The town of Moresheth is a good day's journey from the capital, Jerusalem.

Micah was a man with rural background and "his was the voice from the country side."[1] There is no mention of his family therefore

1. Horton, R. F., The New Century Bible: Minor Prophets, Vol. 1, p. 220 New York: Oxford University Press, American Branch

the assumption is that it was unimportant. However the lack of reference to his family does not absolutely prove that they were unimportant since concerning six other prophets there is no lineage given. But from Micah's message we may safely say that he was a man from a humble peasant home, somewhat like Amos. And he like Amos feels very vividly the injustice done to the common people by the leaders in the Capital.

He differs from his great contemporary Isaiah in that he looks at the social and political situations as a man from the country and Isaiah, being a man of the capital with a high social standing, views the problems from within as a man acquainted with the policies of the rulers. The difference in environmental background can be easily seen in their writings. Micah speaks as a "man of the people;" he sympathizes with the peasants in their sufferings; he attacks more severely than Isaiah the mistreatment they received in the hands of the nobles (3:2-4).[1] Isaiah is interested in the political movements while Micah appears almost exclusively as an ethical and religious teacher. Micah mentions the Assyrians, but as a mere foe, not as a power that might tempt his country to undertake a perilous political enterprise and he raises no voice against the danger of Judah of the Egyptian influence.[1]

J. M. P. Smith says that Micah was a man of the country side and, like Amos, was "gifted with clearness of vision and time for thought."[2] Simplicity of life was conducive to "plain living and high

1. Driver, S. R., An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament, p. 326 New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1923
2. Smith, J. M. P., International Critical Commentary: Micah, p. 18 New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1911

thinking."[1] He is not misled by temporal and superficial standards. He knows the real value of things. He had the passion for social justice that Amos had, and yet we see in him some of the merciful spirit of Hosea. Knowing his people as he did he sympathized with them and his deepest feelings were aroused when any injustice was done to them. He was of such a spirit that he would have stood for justice even if it had cost his own life. That he had a great influence on the common people is shown in the fact that the elders (Jer. 26:18) were acquainted with his teaching concerning Jerusalem a century later. Here he is cited as establishing a precedent for Jeremiah's freedom of speech.

Micah is a great prophet because he links the idea of God with the cause of the people. His whole soul went out to the oppressed. He moved among the common people and was not so much concerned with politics except to show the consequences of disobedience. At all times he was a fearless and courageous prophet of God. Horton says that "it was this genuine ethical sympathy with the poor which made him a suitable delineator of the essentials of religion (6:8)."[2]

Micah is called the democrat because of his interest in the poor and common people. "He heard the voice of God in the sufferings of his hapless neighbors."[3] To him "the voice of duty was the voice of God" and "he found his divine call in the cry of human need."[4] This

1. Smith, J.M.P., International Critical Commentary: Micah, p. 18
2. Horton, R. F., The New Century Bible: Minor Prophets, Vol.1, p. 225 New York: Oxford University Press, American Branch
3. Gordon, Alex. R., The Prophets of the Old Testament, p. 133 London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1916
4. Smith, J.M.P., International Critical Commentary: Micah, p. 19

coloured his whole life and thought and he spoke with great sincerity of heart and depth of soul.

T. H. Robinson pictures Micah as more or less of a small town man. He says that he had the strength and the weakness that such a locality as this would be likely to breed. His horizon is small, he does not even mention Assyria. His vision is limited to the towns around his home. (Taken by Robinson from Smith, G. A., The Historical Geography of the Holy Land, pp. 207-209.) He goes further and says that Micah is only a peasant, with a peasant's outlook and a peasant's experience. He puts him on a rather low level of importance.[1]

It may be true that Micah has a narrow horizon but we certainly need men like him who will look around, see the needs of the people and begin at home in the ministry. Jesus, too, was from a small town, yet He became greater than all the prophets. Amos was from a small town. It would seem as though no man could have seen the real needs of the people except that his horizon had been limited. Some men have such a large horizon that they never see any of the pressing problems near at hand.

Micah, "completely dominated by a vivid consciousness of God and a fervid devotion to the highest interests of his country, goes forth to his task unshrinking and invincible."[2] And when we see the real fearless spirit of Micah, his faith in God, and his sense of the needs of his people we must say that he was a great prophet. He would

1. Robinson, T. H., Prophecy and the Prophets, pp. 89-92
   New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923
2. Smith, J. M. P., International Critical Commentary: Micah, p. 19

have been willing to sacrifice himself for his people. Any man with such a spirit is worthy of our greatest respect.

To get a real appreciation of Micah's work we must understand the background against which he worked. He being a man of the country singles out the capitals of both kingdoms as the objects of divine wrath. However, he attacks mostly the vices of Judah. Society was in a terrible state of affairs and Micah like Amos (2:6,5) gives us a vivid picture of the social evils and injustice (Micah 3:3). McFadyen suggests that Micah himself may have been affected by the greed of the nobles (2:2 cf. Isa. 5:8). He attacks these injustices with the earnestness of Jesus.[1]

The social evils seem to include almost everything. The nobles were so greedy that they built large estates by forcibly ejecting smaller property holders (2:1 & 2). The judges assist powerful friends in robbing the weak (3:11). Widows and orphans were robbed and sold into slavery (2:9). Creditors were without mercy and the common people were heavily taxed (3:10). The nobles were so mean and treacherous that Micah compares them with cannibals who eat human flesh (3:3). The passers by were even stripped of their garments (2:8). The priests and the prophets were mercenary (3:11). The nature of their message was determined by money (3:5). This was the social situation at the time of Micah's prophetic activity. It was because of this universal corruption of society that Micah issues the threat in 3:12 (Quoted in Jer. 26:18).

As to the political background it should be noted that the

1. McFadyen, John E., Abingdon Commentary: Micah, p. 791
New York: Abingdon Press, 1929

states of Palestine were vassals to the Assyrian Empire. Micah, however, was not in connection with the policy of the state and he offered no advice in the political realm. Nevertheless he must have been acquainted with the capital since he condemned the inhabitants there (1:5; 3:9). "His oracles had in view solely the defective religious and moral conditions of the time; and though he asserted that the sins which he denounced would, if not repented of, bring political subversion of the country, he did not intimate the name of the power which was to be the agent of the Divine judgement."[1]

At the time of Micah religion had become a matter of external form. Ceremonial observances were thought to have been all of the requirements of Jehovah. And these people who practiced this superficial religion felt that they had the protection of Jehovah (3:11). We may see from Is. 2:8 that the worship of other Gods was not uncommon. The leaders in the religious life of the people were not fit to be leaders. The prophets alone were appealing to the people on the grounds of real religion. They alone expressed the ethical demands of Israel's God. Without men such as Micah and the other prophets the chances are that Israel would never have developed an ethical monotheism such as she did.

Micah's message was one of judgement for these sins. Jahweh to him was an ethical God and the nation that was disobedient would be destroyed. Micah saw the centers of corruption in the large cities and pronounced doom upon them. Isaiah prophesied the inviolability

1. Wade, G. W., Westminster Commentary: Micah, p xix
London: Methuen and Co., 1925

of Jerusalem and Micah the destruction. History proved both of them to be right for although Jerusalem was saved from destruction in 701 B. C., one hundred and fifteen years later it was a heap of ruins. The Temple had been destroyed and the people were taken captive.

The Date of His Activity

The dates of the activity of Micah are very uncertain. Scholars differ a great deal on this question. G. W. Wade[1], T. K. Cheyne,[2] J. E. McFadyen,[3] S. R. Driver,[4] Harlan Creelman,[5] G. B. Gray[6] and Dr. E. Sellin[7] favor the date (around) 725 B. C., just before the fall of Samaria (722 B. C.) as the beginning of Micah's ministry. R. F. Horton says that "we shall do well to assume that these very diverse utterances were delivered by Micah the Morashtite within the dates assigned by 1:1,

1. Westminster Commentary: Micah, p. XV- XVIII
   London: Methuen and Company, 1925
2. Cambridge Bible: Micah, p. 9
   Cambridge: At the University Press, 1921
3. Abingdon Commentary: Micah, p. 791
   New York: Abingdon Press, 1929
4. An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament, pp. 325-26
   New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923
5. An Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 101
   New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917
6. A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament, pp. 217-18
   New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920
7. An Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 175
   New York: The George H. Doran Co., 1923

viz. 740-700 B. C., except where clauses or passages are conclusively shown to come from a later date or from another hand."[1] J. M. P. Smith,[2] C. F. Kent,[3] and H. Wheeler Robinson[4] favor a date near 701 B. C., the time of Sennacherib's invasion, as the date of the first prophesies of Micah.

Professor J. M. P. Smith[2] presents rather convincing arguments for the date 701 B. C. He says that there is no evidence in the Bible or in Assyrian records that Jerusalem and Judah werejeopardized in 721 B. C. when Sargon overthrew Samaria. Neither does Isaiah seem to have anticipated any immediate danger to Judah in connection with this event. Judah was paying its tribute regularily to Assyria and therefore was out of danger. He says that the kind of destruction threatened in 721 by Micah in 1:6 was not experienced in 721 by Samaria. Neither the biblical records (2 Kings 17:6) nor the Assyrian records (Sargon's Annals II, 11ff.) speak of the destruction of Samaria. Thelatter says, "the city I restored and more than before I caused it to be inhabited." Samaria constantly attempted to throw off the yoke of Assyria Samaria only to be put down. An Assyrian governor was in Samaria as late as 645 B. C.

So Professor Smith concludes from these facts that Micah's

1. The New Century Bible: Minor Prophets, p. 219
   New York: Oxford University Press, American Branch
2. International Critical Commentary: Micah, pp. 19-21
   New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911
3. The Social Teachings of the Prophets and Jesus, p. 70
   New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930
4. Peake's Commentary of the Bible: Micah, p. 559
   New York: T. Nelson and Sons, 1920

prophecy was called forth by the conspiracy that called Sargon to Ashdod in 713-711 B. C., or even better, that which resulted in the campaign of Sennacherib, 704-701 B. C. He says that this is more than probable in the light of the previous history of Samaria, that she was involved in both attempts to overthrow Assyria. "This is more in consonance with the language of 1:2ff. than the view that the prophet looks back upon the events of 721 B. C. and makes a passing allusion to them in order to give weight to his denunciation of Jerusalem." He assigns all of chapters 1 to 3 to one short period, a few weeks or a few months, before Sennacherib's invasion (701 B. C.).

The superscription (1:1) says that Micah prophesied "in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. If Micah prophesied as early as Jotham there are none of his prophecies in the present book of Micah. If Micah had prophesied as early as 1:1 says he did, he would probably have said something concerning the important events of that earlier period such as the Syro-Ephraimitic War at the beginning of the reign of Ahaz (2 Kings 16:5; Isa. 7:1f.) or to the Assyrian invasion of the district of Galilee in 734 (2 Kings 19:9). All of the internal evidence points toward the beginning of the reign of Hezekiah or the latter part of the reign of Ahaz as the beginning of his prophesy. That he prophecied in the reign of Hezekiah is substantiated by Jeremiah 26:18. This does not give us a definite date, however, for the beginning of Micah's activity since Hezekiah's reign extended over a long period of years (720 B. C. (perhaps earlier) to 690 B. C.).

If we set the date of the beginning of Hezekiah's reign at 720 B. C. we must say that the predictions against Samaria were previous to the reign of Hezekiah, that is, of course, on the assumption that Samaria

fell in 722 B. C. However, we are not sure that the reference to Samaria implies the date 722 B. C. On the other hand, scholars hold to this date as the date of the Fall of Samaria. Samaria was not completely destroyed at this time but it probably was not of sufficient importance after 722 B. C. to have him mention it before Jerusalem. The fact that there are no records to show that Jerusalem was in no danger at this time does not prove that the prophet did not feel that she was in danger and would ultimately be destroyed too. He knew well that the fall of the northern kingdom left Judah open to attack from the north and after Samaria, Jerusalem would come next. The fact that Isaiah did not seem to mention any impending danger to Judah proves nothing either, since Isaiah believed in the inviolability of Jerusalem. Micah, being a country man and seeing the sins of the large cities more vividly, would naturally predict their downfall before Isaiah. The fact that there was an Assyrian governor in Samaria until 645 B. C.[1] does not say that it was of any great importance and the fact that it was not completely destroyed does not prove that Micah's prophecy concerning the destruction did not come at least as early as 722 B. C.

Apart from the superscription of the Book we may say from the reference to Micah 3:12 in Jeremiah 26:18 that Micah prophesied in the reign of Hezekiah. We may also draw from the fact that he predicted the destruction of Samaria, that he began his prophetic activity before 722 B. C., since this is the generally accepted date for this catastrophe. In spite of the arguments for a later date for the beginning of his activity, it is the conclusion of this paper that the first prophecies came from c. 725 B. C. when Shalmaneser began his siege of Samaria (the fall of Samaria coming under his successor Sargon).

1. Johns, C.H.W., Assyrian Deeds and Documents, II, 137; III, 108.

(See International Critical Commentary: Micah, p. 20

As to the extent of Micah's activity there is as much divergence of opinion as there is concerning the beginning date. The latest prophecies that could have come from the hand of Micah are those found in 6:1-7:6. Many scholars agree that this section was written at the time of the reign of Manassah (692-638) but many say that the style in this section is different from that of chapters 1 to 3 and therefore could not have come from the hand of the writer of the first three chapters. The conclusion that 6:1-7:6 comes from the time of Manassah is based on (a) child sacrifice (6:7) (See 2 Kings 21); (b) the tone of despondency (7:1ff.) in contrast to the more hopeful outlook in the preceeding sections; (c) the social evils depicted, especially the mistreatment of the righteous (7:2); and (d) the mention of the "Statutes of Omri" and "the works of the house of Ahab" (6:16) in whose counsel "walk" the people, i.e. Baal Worship and possibly the persecution of the adherents of Jehovah.[1]

As to the question of the difference in style between chapters 1 to 3 and 6:1 to 7:6 we may say this is not a conclusive argument against Micah's authorship of this section. These prophecies come from different times and are given to meet different situations. Corruption at the time of the latter prophecies was particularly wide-spread. This accounts for the increased depth of feeling; "the more intense feeling would inspire more earnest and passionate appeals, which, in turn, would influence language and style."[2] The spirit and the ideas expressed in this section are not at all foreign to the prophet of the first sections.

1. Creelman, Introduction to the Old Testament, pp. 101-103

2. Eiselen, Frederick Carl, The Prophetic Books of the Old Testament, Vol.II, p.483 New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1923

In verses 6:1-7:6 we have the prophet denouncing injustice and moral corruption along with the announcement of the resulting judgment (6:9-16). In 6:6-8 he gives the very essence of religion. This is one of the greatest statements in the Old Testament. In 7:1-6 the prophet laments over the corrupt society.

In view of the fact that the internal evidence points toward the reign of Manassah (692-638), that the change in language and style does not disprove Michan authorship, and that the spirit is very closely akin to the fundamental ideas of chapters 1 to 3, we conclude that Micah wrote this section about the year 690 B. C.

The dates of the intervening passages will be taken up in connection with the section on the "Divisions of the Book." The question that has concerned us in this section was the date of the beginning and the extent of Micah's prophetic activity.

Micah's Relation to Isaiah

Micah (725-690) followed close upon Hosea but was a contemporary of Isaiah (740-701). There is a period of 24 years during which their activities overlap. They were both prophets of the southern kingdom (Judah) but they included the northern kingdom in some of their prophesies. In fact, Micah has a lot to say concerning the northern kingdom while Isaiah is primarily concerned with Jerusalem and it's welfare.

The influence of the teachings of Amos and Hosea can be seen in prophecies of Micah but the influence of Isaiah is more direct and can be seen in a more definite way. There are parallel passages in the works of these two men. This is seen as we compare the following:

Micah[1]	1:9-16	with	Isaiah 10:28-32
"	2:1-2	"	" 5:8
"	2:6-11	"	" 28:10 and 30:10-11
"	2:11	"	" 28:7
"	2:12 & 4:7	"	" 10:20-23
"	3:5-7	"	" 29:9-12
"	3:12	"	" 32:14
"	4:1-3	"	" 2:24
"	4:4 end	"	" 1:20 end
"	4:10	"	" 32:11
"	5:2-4	"	" 7:14
"	5:5	"	" 9:6
"	5:9-14	"	" 2:6-17
"	6:6-8	"	" 1:11-17
"	7:7	"	" 8:17
"	7:12	"	" 11:11

As one compares these passages he sees that these two prophets showed many of the same ideas and took similar positions even if their outlook was different.

Isaiah was a statesman and he included in his censures not only social crimes but foreign policy as well. He attributed many of the evils to the reigning king and his court. Micah's outlook was not so inclusive. He had never become acquainted with inner workings of the court nor of the policy of the rulers except as it affected the poor classes with whom he came in contact. He was not so much interested in what the leaders did in relation to Assyria as he was in what the leaders did to the poor. This does not mean that Isaiah was blind to the social

1. Horton, New Century Bible, p. 220

Micah[1]	1:8-16	with	Isaiah 10:28-32
"	2:1-5	"	" 8:8
"	2:6-11	"	" 28:20 and 30:10-11
"	2:11	"	" 28:7
"	2:12 & 4:7	"	" 10:20-23
"	3:8-7	"	" 28:8-13
"	3:12	"	" 32:14
"	4:1-8	"	" 2:24
"	4:4 end	"	" 1:20 and
"	4:10	"	" 33:11
"	5:2-4	"	" 7:14
"	5:5	"	" 9:6
"	5:9-14	"	" 2:8-17
"	6:6-8	"	" 1:11-17
"	7:7	"	" 8:17
"	7:12	"	" 11:11

As one compares these passages he sees that these two prophets stayed many of the same ideas and took similar positions even if their outlook was different.

Isaiah was a statesman and he included in his concerns not only social crises but foreign policy as well. He attributed many of the evils to the reigning king and his court. Micah's outlook was not so inclusive. He had never become acquainted with inner workings of the court nor of the policy of the rulers except as it affected the poor classes with whom he came in contact. He was not so much interested in what the leaders did in relation to society as he was in what the leaders did to the poor. This does not mean that Isaiah was blind to the social

1. Morton, New Century Bible. p. 220

evils. Both prophets denounced the wrongs of society but Micah was more passionate in his condemnation.

Both of these prophets cherished lofty conceptions of Jehovah and of the obligations of the people to Him. Both of these prophets had strong convictions on the victory of the kingdom of God. There are resemblances in thought and topics but as has been pointed out their outlooks are different since they come from entirely different environments.

As one reads the two Books one can sense a deep note of sincerity running through them. These men did not have to prophesy except as they felt it their duty to God. They prophesied because they had a cause to proclaim and a message to give. Neither one of them is in anyway superficial. Both are genuine, frank, unaffected, and to the point. Both of these prophets were lighted with the fire of God and a passion for an ethical religion. It is very interesting that two men so utterly different and yet very much alike should prophesy in practically the same period.

Micah's Style of Writing

Micah's style of writing was different from Isaiah's. In the great prophecies of Isaiah the literary ability of the Hebrews was at its height. Isaiah was the greatest classic prophet in Israel. No prophet in Israel has equaled him in his splendor and triumphant beauty of diction. Micah, although somewhat dignified at times, is more or less blunt and even rough. He no doubt appealed to the common man because of his straightforward attitude. He is direct and forceful. His writings are "characterized by rapidity of movement, picturesque phraseology, vivid description and boldness of utterance."[1]

1. Smith, J.M.P., The International Critical Commentary, p. 6

His writings are marked by the frequent use of rhetorical questions and commands (1:5,11,13,16; 3:1). Like other Hebrew writers, Isaiah particularily, he employs vivid figures of speech (2:3; 3:2,3,10), and is fond of alliteration and assonance.(1:10-15).

Micah's writings reflect the clearness of vision that a simple country man often has. He has keen insight into the problems of his day and into true religion. Micah's spirit runs deep and his writings embody profound feeling.

Micah was not a great writer. He was not interested so much in how his message was worded. He was interested in the people and their relation to God. Everything that he wrote had a definite purpose back of it. It is not the style that makes us admire the prophet but the content. Micah put his very heart and soul into his message - what more can we ask of any man?

CHAPTER 2

THE DIVISIONS OF THE BOOK

The Book of Micah (generally agreed upon by scholars) falls into three main divisions: (1) Chapters 1-3; (2) Chapters 4-5; (3) Chapters 6-7. There is much doubt as to whether Micah wrote all seven chapters, "but the essential unity of Micah is still frequently and vigorously defended."[1]

A. The Denunciation of Sin and the Coming Judgement (1:2-3:12).

1. Judgement upon Samaria and Judah and the prophet's lament (1:2-16).

a) The Heading (v.1) This is an introductory verse probably placed there by the editor of the Book. It is the superscription attempting to tell when Micah prophesied and that it was "the Word of Yahweh" "that came to Micah.....concerning Samaria and Jerusalem."

"The word of Jehovah." This statement is employed to mean the work of the prophet.

"Which came unto." This use of the verb is common in connection with prophetic utterances. It is found in many of the superscriptions to prophetic books as well as several places within the books. The larger usage of the verb represents, "come into existence" or "become." It expresses the conviction of the writer that what the prophet had to say was God's truth.

"In the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah."

1. Gray, C. B., A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 217

This is without much doubt a later addition since there is nothing in the text to indicate that there were any prophecies in the reign of Jotham.

"Which he saw." This probably does not refer to a vision but means "received from God." It implies divine revelation concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

2. The Doom of Israel because of her sins (vv. 2-7).

a) The announcement of Jehovah's appearance as a judge (v. 2).

"Hear, ye peoples, all of you." God's judgement upon the world is now in progress. This is a call to attention. Israel is to be the object of the judgement but all nations are called that they might profit from her experience. The prophet is addressing all nations here, not merely the tribes of Israel.

"O earth, and all that therein is." This designates the world as a whole and not a special portion of it. The nations are summoned not as mere witnesses but as those who should listen, for their own sake, to what is said concerning Israel. Israel's case is only a part of the whole world's case.

"Jehovah be witness." Jehovah through his punishment of Israel will testify against the other nations who are even more guilty than Israel.

"Holy Temple." This means God's heavenly abode and does not refer to the temple in Jerusalem as shown by vv. 3,4.

b) The attendant catastrophe in nature. (vv. 3 & 4).

"Now behold, Jehovah.....place." Jehovah now appears upon the scene and the picture becomes more vivid. The judgment is on the verge of execution. This picture suggests a Theophany, wherein the divine activity is described. "Place" means heavenly temple.

"And tread.....of the earth." A better translation for "high places" is the "heights." This conception is brought forth by the movement, along the mountain tops, of the storm clouds with which God was believed to hide the brightness of His Presence. (cf. Ps.18:10,11).[1]

"And the mountains....under him" (v.4). The imagery here seems to suggest an earthquake or a volcanic eruption rather than a thunderstorm.[2] However some scholars think that it refers to a thunderstorm[3] which will cause landslides on the hills.

"Like wax.....steep places." This refers to the volcanic stream. J.M.P. Smith suggests that this is a later addition.

c) The cause of Jehovah's wrath (v. 5).

"For the transgression of Jacob is all this." Jacob is here applied to the northern kingdom. "All this" refers to the above mentioned cataclysm.

"And for the sin.....Israel." Israel here must stand for the southern kingdom (Judah) if we are to be consistent with the context.

"What is the transgression of Jacob?" Micah sees the large cities as the centers of corruption, not only because of their own sin but because they are the source of much of the sin of the nation. "What is the transgression may be read as "From where does it proceed." Micah condemns the two capitals very vigorously.

"What are the high places of Judah." There seems to be a little inconsistency here in the text. "High places" is supposed to be synonomous with transgression according to the structure of the verse.

1. Wade, G. W., Westminster Commentaries: Micah, p. 4
2. So J.M.P. Smith, H.W. Robinson, and J.E. McFadyen
3. So T. K. Cheyne and R. F. Horton

Micah viewed the cities as the embodiment of the evil of the nation and he probably used "high places" as meaning transgression. Some scholars think that this was a gloss from the marginal note, and should be omitted. Another way of dealing with this is to make the text read "what is the sin of the house of Judah?"

d) Climax of the oracle, prophesying the total destruction of Samaria (v.6).

"Therefore....field." These words are hardly forceful enough for what Micah really wanted to say. Samaria is to become an utter waste, as a ploughed field. It really means "into a heap." His predictions were right because the stones of Samaria have been thrown together in a heap. This did not happen until the Maccabean period, however.

"And .....vineyard." After the ruin of Samaria, which was on a very fertile hill, men would plant vineyards where the city once stood. This is very impressive language. Micah wants to bring out the utter desolation that will come to Samaria.

"And I will pour down the stones." There are evidences today that this took place, There are stones found on the side of the hill and some are seen in the plain below.

e) The attendant destruction of idols (v. 7).

"And all her graven images....pieces." Along with the ruin of the city is to go the destruction of the idols."to whom it ascribes it's blessings and renders worship."[1] This is to prove the powerlessness of their deities. Samaria was notorious for her idols.

"And all her hires...with fire." "Her hires" implies the money that has been given as offerings in the sanctuaries.

1. Wade, G. W., Micah (W C), p. 6

"for the hire.....them." The term "harlot" is used here in connection with religious prostitution (Dt. 23:17, 18, Hos. 4:13, 14) the proceeds of which were devoted to the adornment of idol-gods. The riches adorning the idols of Samaria, Micah felt, would be carried away by her captors and used by her for impure purposes similar to those in connection with which they were originally procured.

"and.....return." The question might arise here as to how these idols already shattered and burned can become hire, the answer is that we should not interpret this as prosaic fact but as poetic. He is probably "thinking of the use made by the heathen conqueror of the trophies of war; these are presented to their deities in acknowledgement of their favor in bestowal of victory, and thus are designated by the prophet as harlot's hire."[1]

3. Micah's Lamentation (vv. 8-16)

Micah like Jeremiah has deep feeling for his nation and his people. He sees the calamity coming; and he knows that it cannot be averted. Therefore he laments over the great destruction that is to come.

a) Micah's wailing and lament (v. 8).

"For this." For the destruction of Jerusalem (v.6), his own city.

"will I lament and wail." The prophet had pronounced doom upon Samaria and Jerusalem. Now as he contemplates the fate of Jerusalem his soul is in anguish. Micah is bound to announce something which he does not want to. It suggests something oriental and is a deep expression of emotion.

1. Smith, J.M.P. Micah (I C C), p. 38

"stripped." Go barefooted (See 2 Sam. 15:30; Isa. 20:2).

"naked." With only an undergarment (see Job 22:6). He is going to go around in the dress of one in sorrow. This represents the garb of a captive.

"like the jackals." The jackals make a long and piteous cry and may be heard almost anytime in Palestine.

"and a lamentation like the ostriches." He makes a contrast between the wailing of the jackals and the fearful screech of the ostrich.

b) The justification of the prophet's grief lies in the fact that Samaria is to fall and that the neighboring cities will also be affected (v. 9).

"For her wound is incurable." Samaria is in deep trouble, but it is not only Samaria's trouble. It has reached Jerusalem and she is now in danger. Hence the "incurableness of the wound." Micah is so certain here that he uses the prophetic perfect to express his thoughts.

"it reacheth.....to Jerusalem." Jerusalem is the seat and center of Judean life. As R. F. Horton suggests, Jerusalem was to the country what a gate is to a city. Micah knew that the fall of Samaria left Jerusalem open more to attack from the north and that the Assyrians would come down there next.

In vv. 10-16 we have a series of curious puns on the names of the towns supposedly near Micah's home. It is probable, although no one can be sure, that Micah was contemplating the Assyrian army which was to invade Judah in its passage through these towns. Prof. G. A. Smith says: "Micah's elegy sweeps across the landscape so dear to him."

c) General lamentation (vv.10-12).

"Tell is not in Gath" (v.10). This phrase is apparently borrowed from David's lament over Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1:20). He does not want the news of Jerusalem's situation carried to other Palestinian towns, especially Gath, where it might be received with malicious satisfaction. Gath was originally a Philistine town.

"weep not at all." Do not give any outward sign of grief that might reveal distress to unfriendly neighbors.

"at Beth-le-aphran.....dust." The margin makes this "at a house of dust have I rolled myself in dust." Scholars have not located the position of this town. Rolling and wallowing in the dust was a custom of mourners.

"inhabitant." This is really feminine: inhabitress.

"Saphir" (v.11). This means "beauty-town."

Micah seems to want to make contrast here between the name of the town and the ignominious departure which will be forced upon the inhabitants.

"the inhabitant of Zaanan .....not come forth." This may suggest that the inhabitants of Zaanan will not come forth to help the others, they are afraid to face the foe.[1]

"the wailing of Beth-ezel.....stay thereof." The name here suggests "House of proximity." The nearness should be a refuge for those flying from their homes, but it will be too panic stricken to offer relief.[1]

"For" (v. 12). The conjunction of verse 9 is repeated, explaining the prophet's distress as "for" of v. 9.

"Maroth" (v. 12). The site of this town is unknown. The name means bitterness and the contrast is made with the good fortune

1. Wade, G. W., Micah (W C), p. 10

that the people hope for.

d) Flight of inhabitants and loss of territory as viewed by the prophet, (vv. 13-14).

"Bind the chariot.....of Lachish." The people of Lachish are told to use their swiftest steed to escape the coming invader.

"she was.....Zion." It would seem as though this city (Lachish) had furnished some sin that was implanted in Zion. It may be that some idolatrous cult went from here to the capitol.

"for the transgressions.....in thee." This seems to suggest not that Lachish is characterized by such sins as are common to all the cities of Israel, but that the responsibility for the general guilt rests largely upon Lachish.[1]

"Therefore...give....to Moresheth-gath." The peophet thinks that Gath is going to pass into the hands of the invader. So he bids Judah to give a gift to the parting city, just as a father would give a gift to his daughter who was getting married.

"Achzib shall be.....of Israel." Achzib suggests the thought of deception or disappointment. The kings who expect relief from this town will be badly disappointed. The suggestion is that it will be as a brook that is dry when the thirsty traveler reaches it.

e) Climax and vision of the exile (v. 15).

"I will yet.....possess thee." Even this city rejoicing in it's name, a possession, shall not escape the hand of the conqueror.

"the glory.....into Adullam." There is much difference of opinion among scholars on the meaning of this. It may have meant that the best part of Israel or the remaining few would seek refuge at Adullam. This probably was a city in the lowland, famous for it's caves.

1. Smith, J.M.P., Micah (I C C), p. 47

It is perhaps the modern Id'-el-mâ, 6 miles northeast of Beit-Jibrin.

"Make thee bald,.....delight" (v. 16). Zion is here pictured as a mother and is bidden to mourn for the loss of her children. The prophet visions the people of these cities (10-15) going into exile. The shaving of the hair was an act of mourning among the early peoples.

"eagle". This is probably better translated vulture, which has the head and neck bare.

The consideration of the date of this chapter was taken up in the first section. The conclusion was that it came sometime previous to the fall of Samaria in 722 B. C., probably c. 725 B. C.

4. The Social sins which had brought the Judgement of Chapter One (2:1-11).

In this chapter Micah deals with the specific social sins of Judah. It is here that we see his spirit to be similar to that of Amos. He condemns the greedy landowners for robbing the poor. He is not so much interested in idolatry or in the wrong foreign policy, but being a countryman he sees vividly the oppression inflicted upon the poor.

a. Denunciation of the oppressors (vv.1-2).

"Woe to them that devise iniquity (v.1). Here the prophet pronounces woe upon the rich who have plenty and yet are greedy to get more. These men probably became rich in the long and prosperous reign of Uzziah. Micah's spirit flames forth in indignation against the greedy who oppress his own people.

"And work evil." Some scholars think this to be an insertion since upon a "bed" evil could only be planned. Therefore it should be thought of as meaning that they "prepared the ways and means."

"Upon their beds." They lay awake nights planning how they may take advantage of the poor.

"When the morning is light." This is brought in to contrast with the night work of planning. These men can hardly wait until morning to put their plans into effect.

"because it is.....hand." "They oppress and rob because they can."[1]

"And they covet.....and seize them" (v.2). The law against coveting (Ex. 20:17) is itself a gross offence against the law of God. "Large additions to one's estates were diametrically opposed to the ancient customs and written or unwritten law of land-tenure among the Israelites."[2] The old land customs were being affected by the land-grabbing of the rich. This practice was not only unjust but it also was against their customs, legal and religious.

Micah who saw his neighbor's land being taken away by greedy men raised his voice against this heathen practice. God demanded justice and therefore he felt bound to condemn such practices.

"And they oppress a man and his house." This means that since the property has been taken away there is nothing for the owner to do but to leave.

b) The punishment that shall befall the leaders.

Jehovah begins to speak now and tell of the punishment that is coming to these men (vv. 3-5).

"Against this family" (v.3). That is against Israel. Israel is the family that Jehovah has known of all the families of the earth (Amos 3:2) and yet He is of such a nature that He will punish them for her sins. The idea of a nation as a family may have originated from

1. Smith, J.M.P., (I C C), p. 57

2. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible, Micah, p. 24

the idea that all of Israel descended from the three sons of Noah and their households (see Gen. 10).

"Devise an evil." Jehovah will deal with these people in his own way and that will mean ruin to them. The word "evil" here carries the meaning of retributive punishment.

"from which.....necks." The evil predicted is thought of here as a yoke on the neck of a beast of burden.[1]

"haughtily." Because bowed down by the weight of the yoke (probably of a foreign master.)

"for it is an evil time." The same phrase occurs in Amos 5:13, but there it refers to the internal corruption of the state while here it refers to the external danger to the country.

"take up"(v. 4). That is take upon their lips.

"parable." This means "taunt song" or a "satirical dirge."

"and lament with a doleful lamentation." This is better rendered: "and lament with a lamentation:"

'It is done,' they shall say
We be utterly spoiled:
He changeth the portion of my people;
How doth he remove it from me[2]
Unto the rebellious he divideth our fields.'[3]

The complaint is that Jehovah (whom the Israelites believe are sending the trouble) has transferred the promised land to heathen men, who have always been against Jehovah. Micah does not mention the one that is to be the foe that will take their land but the people well

1. So J. M. P. Smith and G. W. Wade
2. So T. K. Cheyne, J. M. P. Smith, G. W. Wade
3. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible: Micah, p. 25,26

understand that he was referring to Assyria.

"Therefore thou shalt have none" (v.5). This is a very difficult verse and has been interpreted in many ways.[1] T. K. Cheyne interprets it as meaning that because the upper classes of Israel have violated God's laws they will have no part in the redistribution of the land. "And this because the "congregation of Jehovah," from which such a redistribution should proceed, will consist only of the oppressed peasant-class."

"cast the line by lot," a better rendering of this is 'cast the measuring line upon a lot,' as in the happy days of early conquest when Joshua appointed the lots of the several tribes (Joshua 15:1; 16:1; 17:1).[2]

c) The protest of the rich against these prophecies (vv. 6,7).

"Prophesy ye not" (v. 6). Here we have a word from the false and popular prophets who tried to silence the real prophets.(More on the false prophets below).

"They shall not prophesy to these." "To these" means "concenning these things." The suggestion is that these men were tired of hearing Micah and wanted to silence him. They felt as though he was overstepping his ground.

"reproaches shall not depart." This is probably better rendered "shall reproaches not cease?"[3] They condemn the real prophets for speaking as they do.

"Shall it be said, O house of Jacob" (v.7). Jacob here refers to Judah. The rich are speaking, they are addressing the nation.

1. Cheyne, T. K., Cambridge Bible: Micah, p. 26
2. Horton, R. F., New Century Bible: Micah, p. 235
3. IBID, p. 236

"Is the spirit of Jehovah impatient." How can Jehovah be angry with his chosen people? This is the suggestion of this phrahe. These false prophets feel that anything that Judah does is all right. But never did the real prophets shrink from condemning their own nation when sinful.

"are these his doings." Is this the way he is going to treat his chosen people?

"Do not my words.....uprightly." These people are apparently unconscious of their sin and believe that they are"walking uprightly" and therefore receive the approval of Jehovah.

d) Jehovah's reply to the rich oppressors (vv.8-9).

"But of late my people.....enemy" (v.8). One of the real enemies of Israel is to be found within the nation - it is the rich who oppress the poor.

"robe.....garment." The robe is the upper garment which was thrown over the tunic by day and used as a covering by night. This statement probably refers to the taking of a garment as security for debt, in violation of Ex. 22:26-27. This verse is not to be taken literally but as meaning that they take advantage of the innocent. The text here is not clear and an adequate rendering is almost impossible.

"The women.....houses; from their young....forever" (v.9). In their greedy haste to acquire more and more land these men do not even hesitate to expell families and even sell the children into slavery for debt. "take away my glory" refers to the taking away from the Israelites the privilege which belongs to the chosen people. The children lost this "glory"when sold in heathen lands.

e) Jehovah's summary of the coming doom (vv.10-11).

"Arise ye, and depart, this is not your resting-place" (v.10).

Those who have driven out others are now themselves to be driven out.

"because of uncleanness,.....destruction." These men who considered themselves upright are brought face to face with the strict demands of Jehovah. No ceremonial observances will suffice in this case, morality is demanded.

"walking in a spirit of falsehood" (v.11). The prophet who "walks in the spirit of falsehood" and who promises material blessings of the sensual type will be the popular prophet among the people. The morals of the people have fallen to this low level.

f) The return of the Exiles (vv.12-13).

There is such an abrupt change here between verse eleven and twelve that most scholars have ascribed these two verses (12,13) to the period of the exile. Some scholars, however, interpret vv. 12,13 to be in the same spirit as the previous verses and therefore written by Micah. Sellin[1] thinks that this refers to a time previous to the exile and it means that the remnant will be concentrated in Jerusalem for their preservation. The situation presupposed seems to be that of an exile and this is a message of encouragement to the people. The question arises as to whether this presupposition is an actual fact or merely something in the mind of the prophet. Micah's message was not one of unmitigated doom; he has hope for the future. There is severe judgement coming but that will be followed by the reassembling of the purified remnant by Yahweh. The assumption by many scholars that anything of hope is of a later date is hardly fair to the pre-exilic prophets. They had their hopeful outlook too. The linguistic argument does not prove this to be of a later date. This section probably came from the hand of Micah along with some of the other hopeful passages. It may have been written at a different time and inserted here by the

1. Sellin, Dr. E., (I O T), p. 176

compiler since the book of Micah consists of a considerable number of brief notes or summaries.

"I will.....all of thee" (v. 12). This is a promise of the writer that Jehovah will assemble all of Israel (Jacob), and yet only a "remnant" on which the new and better Israel will be built.

"as the sheep of Bozrah." This probably refers to the Bozrah in Edom that is a famous pastoral country. The suggestion here is "as sheep into a fold."

"they shall.....men." This suggests that there will be a great multitude of men who will swarm to their home.

"The breaker.....them" (v.13). The breaker probably is Jehovah. It means that they will be released from that which holds them in captivity.

"And their king....at the head of them." The title king designates Jahweh who is to lead the people out of Exile.

5. Continuation of the condemnation of the rulers and the false prophets and the doom of Israel (3:1-12).

a) A warning to the rulers for their treatment of the ruled (vv.1-4).

"And I said" (v.1). This beginning of chapter three seems to presuppose some situation which would call for the Micah's answer. Since there is no such situation here, we may say that the connecting link to which this refers has been lost or we may interpret it not as having reference to something preceeding but as starting a new subject (cf. I Samuel, which beings 'and it came to pass.')[1]

"Jacob.....Israel." Jacob and Israel here are synonyms for Judah. Micah again refers especially to the rulers in Jerusalem (v.10).

1. Horton, R. F., Micah (N C B), p. 239

"to know justice." Micah here refers not only to knowing justice from the intellectual standpoint but practicing justice in the righteous adminstration of the law.

"Ye who hate the good, etc." (v.2). This is a bold statement but their actions in dealing with the poor seemed to substantiate it.

"Ye who pluck.....them, and.....bones." The antecedent of the pronouns used here is not clear. G. W. Wade says that they refer to "my people" in the next verse. This is the anticipatory use of the personal pronoun as in Is. 13:2.[1] This seems to be the logical explanation of the use of these pronouns.

"eat the flesh" (v.3). Micah here pictures the people as a flock under the care of watch-dogs (rulers). Rather than protecting them they pounce upon them like wolves.

"and flay....them, and break their bones." These figures picture with vividness the treatment that the landowners were receiving in the hands of the rich. It is not to be taken literally but figuratively. The very life was being crushed out of these people.

"and chop.....pot, and caldron." This suggests that the land of the poor was dealt out like meat out of a pot. The rich were living at the expense of the poor. The poor were just the same as killed.

"Then shall they cry" (v.4). To these men who oppress the poor there will come a day of retribution; and then they who have not listened to these warnings will find that Jehovah will not hear their prayers.

1. See S. W. Wade, Micah (W C), p. 22

"he will hide his face." This is a common figure for divine displeasure.

b) The condemnation of the false prophets (vv.5-8).

"that make my people err" (v. 5). The prophets that Micah condemns are those who prophecy from other than altruistic motives. Those who are swayed by narrow patriotism and material interests. They have a very low conception of God.

"they bite.....teeth." This is a crude picture continuing somewhat of the idea of cannibalism in verses two and three. It means that these prophets will proclaim peace to anyone who gives them money or food.

"and whoso.....against them." Those who will not "bribe" them are denounced by these men even though there may be no grounds for it.

"Therefore it shall be night unto you etc." (v. 6). This means that in the day of Judgement those who abuse the gifts of vision will have them taken away. And when Israel is in need of the prophecy the most they will have no message.

"and it shall.....divine." "Divine," says J.M.P. Smith, is never used by legitimate prophetic activity, but always of the acts of magic and soothsaying.[1]

"and the sun.....them." The second half of the verse repeats what is said in the first-half, to emphasize the first part of the verse.

"And the seers....confounded" (v.7). A seer was a person who was supposed to have extraordinary mental powers and who could see into the future. These seers, Micah says, will "be put to shame" because of the failure of their predictions. The name seer must have by this time become associated with the false prophets. The "diviners" were

1. See J.M.P. Smith, (I C C), p. 75

probably the result of foreign influences upon Israel. They were associated with the Philistines (I Sam. 6:2), Canaanites (Dt.18:14; I Sam. 28:8), Ammonites (Ezek. 21:29), and Babylonians (Is. 44:25).[1]

"And they shall.....lips." This was a sign of mourning (Lev. 13:45; Ezek. 24:17,22). The older custom was to remove the hair on the lip for a hair offering to the dead. Here the covering of the upper lip probably refers to a custom which was a substitute for the cutting off of the hair. The cutting off of the hair or the covering of it with the hands may have been originally designed to alter the appearance of the face so that the spirit of the dead could not recognize them to haunt them. It later signified wretchedness and mourning.

"for there.....God." God will not reveal his will to them.

"But as for me, I am full of power" etc. (v.8). Micah feels sure that he is called of God to prophecy, which he really was. There is that inner conviction that would have lead him to face death rather than cease giving his message. He felt as though God had given him power or the capacity to fulfill his mission.

"and of judgment, and of night." The other prophets were swayed by popular influences. Micah received his sense of right from God and also his energy of propounding the right.

"To declare.....sin." All of the prophets felt it their task to expose and denounce the sin of their own people.

c. The Doom of Israel (vv. 9-12).

In verse 9 Micah again brings up the leaders ~~of leaders~~ for their sin and oppression. Here he strengthens what he has previously said: "That abhor justice, and pervert all equity."

1. See G. W. Wade, Micah (W C), p. 25

probably the result of foreign influences upon Israel. They were associated with the Philistines (I Sam. 6:2), Canaanites (Dt.18:14; I Sam. 28:8), Ammonites (Ezek. 21:29), and Babylonians (Is. 44:25).[1]

"And they shall.....lips." This was a sign of mourning (Lev. 13:45; Ezek. 24:17,23). The older custom was to remove the hair on the lip for a hair offering to the dead. Here the covering of the upper lip probably refers to a custom which was a substitute for the cutting off of the hair. The cutting off of the hair or the covering of it with the hands may have been originally designed to alter the appearance of the face so that the spirit of the dead could not recognize them to haunt them. It later signified wretchedness and mourning.

"for there.....God." God will not reveal his will to them.

"But as for me, I am full of power" etc. (v.8). Micah feels sure that he is called of God to prophecy, which he really was. There is that inner conviction that would have lead him to face death rather than cease giving his message. He felt as though God had given him power or the capacity to fulfill his mission.

"and of judgment, and of might." The other prophets were swayed by popular influences. Micah received his sense of right from God and also his energy of propounding the right.

"To declare.....sin." All of the prophets felt it their task to expose and denounce the sin of their own people.

c. The Doom of Israel (vv. 9-12).

In verse 9 Micah again brings up the leaders ~~of leaders~~ for their sin and oppression. Here he strengthens what he has previously said: "That abhor justice, and pervert all equity."

1. See C. W. Wade, Micah (W C), p. 25

"They build.....iniquity." (v.10). The prophet denounces the building of material things through money confiscated from innocent victims. "Blood", of course, is not to be taken literally but to mean oppression of the poor.

In verse 11 Micah condemns the leaders, the priests and the prophets for being mercenary and letting money sway their decisions.

"Yet they lean upon Jehovah, and say," etc. (v. 11). These men did not feel that they were outside the folds of religion. It probably would have been better if they had. They felt as though they had the divine sanction of Jahweh. The popular conception was that nothing could harm them. Against this the prophets spoke and ran into stiff opposition. The people felt that the preforming of ceremony was all that was necessary; Yahweh cared for little more. But the prophets attempted to correct such ideas (See 6:6-8; Is. 1:10-17; Amos 5:21-27; Hosea 6:6).

"for your sake" (v. 12). As a consequence of your (the leaders) misconduct.

"as a ploughed field." (See Jer. 26:18 for a quotation of this verse in the days of Jeremiah). This is a figure for total destruction. Zion was the name of the Jebusite stronghold taken by David (25.5:6-9). It was probably located on the southern slope of the hill east of the Tyropoean Valley. But the name soon came to be applied to the whole city. Here it is, therefore, used in parallel to Jerusalem (also in v. 10).[1]

"And Jerusalem.....heaps." Micah was the first prophet to threaten Judah with the annihilation of it's capitol; but he speaks of it fearlessly. He felt as though Jerusalem, the heart of the pollution, must be destroyed. He has a warm heart for his fellow

1. See J. M. P. Smith, (I C C), p. 81

countrymen who are suffering but he condemns without flinching the men of the large cities.

"the mountain.....forest." The mountain refers to the hill on which the Temple stood (Mt. Zion). The prophets says that the temple will be destroyed and trees will grow up on the hill. This is a vivid picture of complete destruction.

The date of these three chapters in this first section is as has been shown in an earlier section c. 725 B. C., not long before the destruction of Samaria.

B. Promises of Hope and Future Glory (Chapters 4 & 5).

I. The date

There is a great variety of opinion among scholars as to the date and authenticity of this section. Some say that none of it belongs to Micah, others say that only certain parts of it come from Micah, and some vigorously hold to the genuineness of this section.

The arguments against Micah's authorship of this section are based on: (1) the sudden changes from messages of glory to those of doom and visa versa; (2) there are sections here that are mutually exclusive and therefore could not have been written by one man; (3) the ideas expressed here were not current in the time of Micah; and (4) certain things are presupposed by Micah which are foreign to Micah's era.[1]

The first objection loses some of it's force when we admit that the pre-exilic prophets had hope for the preservation of a remnant. These prophecies applied not to all the people but to the remnant. The ideas concerning the salvation of a remnant cannot be removed from the other prophets, so it is reasonable to suspect that Micah held similar ideas. If we assume this then the pictures of future glory in

1. See Frederick Carl Eiselen, The Prophetic Books of O.T., Vol.11, p.481

Micah are only what one would expect. If we remember that this section is made up of several separate oracles coming from different times in his activity, and "describing the ideal future and the events leading up to it from different points of view, suggested by the ever-changing historical background," the first objection fades away. The second objection would carry a lot of weight if these chapters were supposed to have been delivered as one discourse; but when we realize that chapters 4 and 5 are made up of several oracles, delivered at different times, in different circumstances, and growing out of certain historical situations, the other arguments are not so convincing. It is true though that scholars say that the style is different from Micah's, and that the ideas expressed reflect a later date; however, it seems that when we see the verses in their real settings we may safely say that they come from the hand of Micah.[1] "Commentators, like Wellhausen and Nowack, who are convinced that the book from chapter 4 onward comes from another hand and time than Micah's, not only miss the Divine element in the prophetic mind, viz. the blending of threat and promise, as the seer has visions of hope or fear."[2]

Wellhausen, Nowack, Giesebrecht, and other scholars hold that only a small kernel of these chapters come from the hand of Micah (4:9,10; 5:1,10-14). But the only argument that they offer that is convincing is the mention of the Babylonian Exile in 4:10b. Here there is probably a late gloss, the writer wrongly understanding the "going forth into the field," 10a, as a reference to the Exile, for the phrase "there shalt thou be delivered" does not refer to "Babylon" but to the

1. See Eiselen, Frederick Carl, (P B O T) Vol. D., P. 482

2. Horton, R. F., Micah (N C B), p. 243

"field."[1]

Sellin says that none of the other arguments is sound. The "Deuteronomic colouring" (by which is meant the imagery of casting off halting and sickness, etc., 4:6f) is found in Babylonian and Egyptian prophecies as early as 2000 B. C. The "abruptness" "want of connection," "desultoriness" are merely characteristics of the eschatological style. Chapter 5 verse 3 presupposes, not the Babylonian Exile, but Sargon's Deportation of 722 B. C.[2]

Against the arguments for a later date, the circumstances of Micah's time are shown in verses 4:8; 4:9,10a; 5:1,3,5. According to these passages Judah has a king and an earthly king (5:1). The people are forced into the city in a group, and they are besieged, and the hosts of the heathen (Assyria, according to 5:5) are gathered against it. But this time of trial is to be the beginning of the time of salvation (4:6,7). Judah is to "break forth," (2:13; 4:10a) the heathen will be crushed before the walls of the city of Jerusalem (4:12f;5:8f). The dominion of Judah, 4:8; 5:7, which is also the dominion of Yahweh, 4:1-7, and of the Deliverer, 5:2-6, is on the verge of beginning. There are exact parallels for all of these thoughts in Isaiah (especially 29:1-10). Verses 10-14 of Chapter 5 exclude the post-Exilic period in general because of the reference to "horses," "chariots," and "strongholds," and theMaccabaean period especially for which Marti contends, by the"witchcrafts," "asherahs," etc., of verses 12 and 14.

Sellin concludes then that we have here a document of "pre-Exilic Eschatology of Salvation." But if it is pre-Exilic the author

1. Sellin, Dr. E., Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 176
2. IBID, p. 177

is probably Micah in spite of the apparent inconsistency between this section and 3:12. It gives us an idea of how Micah regarded the approaching peril (of year 701 B. C.) in the light of eschatology.[1]

The presentation of the two views of these two scholars shows that all of the evidence, by no means, is on the side of those who hold to a later date. To suppose that a prophet had to preach nothing but doom, or be inconsistent, seems rather absurd. Historical developments present new situations and new situations bring different reactions from the prophets. These came from different periods but, as can be seen in all the prophets, most of the writings of the prophets were brought forth by dangerous political situations. In view of the mention of Assyria in 5:5 we may set the date of these prophecies as sometime previous to Sennacherib's invasion in 701 B. C. McFadyen says that the changing moods "reflect the kaleidoscopic changes in the fortunes of the city in his time, especially during the Assyrian invasion of 701 B. C."[2]

2. The Divisions.

a. The Ideal world - Jahweh the ruler (4:1-5).

After the dark pictures that the prophet has painted he turns to the hopeful aspect. Fully conscious of the present wrongs he looks to the future to be ideal. The nations will be at peace, Jerusalem will be the spiritual metropolis, and Jahweh will be the ruler and judge of the world.

In Isaiah 2:2-4 we have the same words. The questions arise as to whether Micah copied from Isaiah, Isaiah copied from Micah, or whether they both copied from a third source. Many scholars believe

1. See Dr. E. Sellin, (I O T), pp. 176-177

2. McFadyen, M. E. Micah (A C), p. 795

this to have been written in a later period and to have been added to both books by a later editor.

The ideas involved here are not too far advanced to have been written by such a great prophet as Isaiah or even by Micah. Isaiah held to the inviolability of Jerusalem and to the preservation of a remnant. Why should he not have held to the idea that Jerusalem would become the great spiritual center of the world? It seems very logical that he should have. And it seems altogether probable that Micah saw in this great prophet of the city ideas much like his own and that he took this passage from Isaiah as expressing his own future outlook. The passage seems to be much in harmony with the spirit of Isaiah, who wanted Hezekiah to trust in God to protect Judah rather than Assyria. Micah seeing that this passage, which presented a picture of an ideal future in which nations were at peace and all peoples allowed Jahweh to settle all disputes, was just the ideal that he held in mind for the peasants, who, at that time, were being crushed, placed it in his own prophecies. It is true, however, that we cannot be certain just what took place. It is possible that a later editor took it from Isaiah and added it to Micah's work.

"in the latter days"(v. 1). This means in the days to come. According to the following verses the Messianic age is to have no end, it is to be eternal. So he probably means "in the future" this ideal will be accomplished.

"that the mountain.....mountains." This verse, although it presents an altogether different picture, serves as a natural link with 3:12. "established" means not for a time but it carried the idea of something abiding. "on the top of the mountains" refers not so much to physical height as to the temple of Jahweh as being

greater than all others. It's fame shall go forth to all the nations and they will recognize it as the center of their religious life. People will come from all parts of the earth bringing offerings. It will be then as if it were on the top of the hills, so that all people should see it.

"and people shall flow into it." The vision of the world wide influence of Jahweh. The people of the world will "stream" to the temple.

"Come ye, let us.....Jacob" (v.2). The prophet visualizes the nations as encouraging one another to undertake religious pilgrimages. The religion of the world is centralized at Jerusalem, as the only authorized place of worship.

"and he will teach.....paths." The suggestion here is that Jahweh will not reveal his will entirely to them but that they will be taught enough for their present needs.

"For out.....Jerusalem." "law" means "instruction" rather than law. These words seem to still be a part of the utterance of the nations. It is a recognition by the world of Jerusalem as the center of their religious life. This is in the future and this is the way the prophet pictures it.

"And he.....afar off" (v.3). As at this time all cases were brought to the priests as the court of last resort and to Yahweh as the supreme judge, so in the days to come (Messianic Age) all nations will bring their disputes to Jahweh, accepting his decision as right.

"and they.....pruning hooks." This is a picture of world disarmament. Israel had seen enough of the disastrous effects of war and so the prophets look to a peaceful future "Nations shall not

even study war but will turn their attention to peaceful industry.

"But they shall.....fig-tree" (v.4). This verse contains a personal aspect while verse three was national. The prophet portrays the peaceful Palestinian country side where his people will enjoy peace and plenty.

"the mouth.....it" (v.5). This gives a sense of the divine origin of the prophecy and that only through the intervention of Jahweh can this be brought about.

"For all....forever and ever." This verse is difficult to interpret following, as it does, on the hopeful verses 1-4, Micah though foretelling this ideal future probably realizes that it is far in the future and says that until the ideal comes Israel will stand by Jahweh even though other nations stand by their gods.

b. Restoration and healing of the dispersed (vv.6-8).

"In that day" (v.6). In the Messianic Age (v.1).

"will I assemble.....away." This suggests the exilic community as a whole. The prophet says that Jehovah will assemble a remnant of the Israelites in the Messianic age.

"and that which I have afflicted." -The prophets never hesitated to make Jahweh responsible for troubles of Israel, but always as a punishment of sin.

"And I will.....a remnant" (v.7). We must think of the remnant as furnishing a seed for the new Israel. The remnant idea was strong in Isaiah's prophecy.

"and that.....strong nation." He is here speaking of the whole nation (the exiles), not a part of the nation.

"and Jehovah.....for ever." Jahweh will become king in a larger and truer sense than ever before, to the exclusion of an

earthly king. The beginning is not far off and it is to be an eternal reign.

"And thou,.....flock." (v.8). The prophet again speaks in terms of a flock of sheep. The "tower" was a high structure overlooking the sheepfold in which the flock was gathered at night (Num. 32:16). From this tower the shepherd could watch and protect his sheep from wild beasts. Some scholars think that the desolation of Jerusalem is assumed here, but it would seem as though it rather pictures Jerusalem as the headquarters of Jahweh, the protector of Israel (See Isa.14:32). The figure, probably, suggests the experience of Jerusalem in the campaign of Sennacherib, 701 B. C. The city was saved and in what seemed to be a miraculous way and hence the stamp of approval of Jahweh seemed to be on the city.[1]

"the hill of the daughter of Zion." "Hill" really means "height." It is used as fortified hills. Here a particular fortified hill is meant, the so-called Ophel. Scholars differ as to what hill was meant. Most believe it to refer to the southern end of the hill Moriah between the Temple and Siloam, bounded on the Kedron, and on the west by the Tyropaeon valley. (This view is uncertain). Jotham (2 Chron. 37:3) strengthened the fortifications of 'Ophel,' and here is representative of the power of Jerusalem.

"the former dominion." This refers to the widest extent of the kingdom which was at the time of David and Solomon.

"the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem." The meaning here is not clear but it probably means that Jerusalem's great honor is to come to her as the representative of the entire nation, the people of Jahweh.[2]

1. See J.M.P. Smith (Micah, I C C), pp. 94.95.

2. For a thorough explanation of this verse see IBID, p. 95

c. Distress and Redemption (vv. 9, 10).

"Why dost thou cry aloud" (v. 9). The one spoken to here is "the daughter of Zion." This passage has been brought forth at a time when danger is threatening Jerusalem. It probably comes at the time of Sennacherib's invasion in 701 B. C.

"Is there.....perished." The confusion and terror was so great that it would seem that there was no ruler to protect the people. The term "counselor" is used as a synonym for "king." This does not imply a post-exilic date and does not refer to a time when Israel was without a king. It is an ironical statement. Why trust in those who cannot help?

"that pangs.....travail?" This is a figure that is used to describe most vividly physical pain.

"Be in pain,.....travail" (v.10). The figure of verse nine is here enlarged upon. In the former verse the prophet ironically asks why Jerusalem "crys out aloud?" Here he is saying that Jerusalem has every reason to be in anguish.

"for now.....field." The people will soon have to leave the walled city that has protected them and go to be exposed to the beasts and hostile armies. The exit from the city means surrender of it.

"and shalt.....Babylon." This is a later addition to the text, written in the post-Exilic period. At the time of Micah Assyria was the predominate power and not Babylon. Some scholars hold this reference to Babylon as being sufficient proof of its being written in the Exilic or post-Exilic period and therefore not from Micah. But as we study Chapters 1-3 we know that Micah expected the

fall of Jerusalem close upon the fall of Samaria. Jeremiah 26:18f. shows that at the time of this great prophet the prediction there cited was regarded as long past. Therefore it seems logical that Micah should have written the first part of the verse but not the reference to Babylon.

"there shalt.....enemies." Even though the people will be forced out of the city they will be rescued by Jahweh. This is a great hope and this will be the beginning of the Messianic era.

d. The deliverance of Jerusalem and the destruction of the enemy (vv.11-13).

"And now.....thee." (v.11). Jerusalem is here addressed. Micah again looks into the future and prophecies that the nations will assemble themselves against Jerusalem, and they say: "Let her... Zion." The nations will rejoice when she is defeated and driven out of the city.

"But they know not.....counsels." (v. 12). Isaiah (Isa.10: 5-19) also had pictured the Assyrian army as unconsciously working out the purpose of Yahweh in connection with Israel. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him" (Ps. 25:14). The foe in pursuit of their own purposes, unconsciously fulfil Jehovah's.

"for he.....threshing-floor." The fate prepared for Zion will come to the other nations. They know it not for Jehovah has brought them together as sheaves are brought together to be threshed.

"Arise and thresh" (v.13). "thresh" is a figurative term used for "conquer"Israel is to be the agent of Jehovah in crushing the enemies.

"for I will.....brass." The oxen were used to thresh the grain by allowing them to walk upon it. The figure of the iron

hoofs is therefore appropriate. The brass horns introduce a new element which suggests the going of the enemy. It probably is a figure suggesting strength and power.

"and thou.....people." "And thou shalt pulverize to dust many peoples." Complete anhilation of the nations is here pictured.

"and I will.....unto Jehovah." All things of value (silver, gold, etc.,) will be taken and presented at the temple of Jehovah.

"and their substance.....earth." The gain of the nations gotten by unethical means will be given to the God of the world, to whom it rightly belongs.

e. The Messiah and the coming Messianic Era (5:1-15)

(1) The Messiah's birth and reign (5:1-5a).

"Now ahalt.....troops" (v.1). This is another picture of siege and may have come from the same time as 4:9,10. The word rendered troops here very often is translated "marauders," although occasionally it means the regular divisions of the Israelite army. It may be an ironical command for Israel to organize her troops in the face of an impending siege ("he hath laid siege against us.")

"they shall smite.....cheek." Humiliation awaits the chief magistrate of Israel from the hands of the besiegers.

"But thou, Beth-lehem Ephrathah"(v.2). After the dark picture of verse one the prophet relieves the gloom with the promise of a Messiah who will come out of the town of David. The family of David were Ephrathites of Bethlehem Judah (Is. 17:12). The Davidic dynasty sprang from Bethlehem. Ephrathah seems to have been a district in which Bethlehem was situated. David had been a great and powerful king and it was natural the prophet should expect the Messiah to come out of this town.

"which art.....Judah." This was so small that one would hardly expect it to be included among the cities of Judah. Bethlehem does not figure among the cities of Judah listed in Josh. 12:20-63; and it is called a village in John 7:42. It was just a small town six miles southwest of Jerusalem.

"Out of thee.....Israel." Out of Bethlehem is to come forth the one who is to be ruler over Israel, in accordance with the purpose of Jahweh ("unto me").

"whose goings.....everlasting." He will belong to one of the oldest families such as the Davidic. "from everlasting" is hard to understand but he must want to convey the idea of great antiquity.

"therefore will he.....forth." (v.3). Yahweh will deliver Israel into the hands of the foes but only until she who is to bring forth a son to be the ruler of Israel. This is an allusion to Isaiah's prophecy Immanuel (Isa. 7:14).

"then the residue....Israel." "his" must refer to the Messiah. The meaning of "his brethren" is rather obscure. It probably refers to the exiles and their return under the Messiah's leadership.

"He shall stand.....God" (v.4). The Messiah's strength will not be of himself but of God.

"and they shall abide." "they shall dwell in safety" is the usual meaning attached to this phrase.

"for now.....earth." They will be safe because the Messiah's power and authority will be recognized by all.

"And this.....peace" (v.5). "And in this way will peace be insured," is a more correct rendering of this.

(2) The conquering of Assyria (5b-6).

"When the Assyrian.....palaces." The invasion is not thought

of by the prophet as something remote but something near at hand and therefore must be dealt with. This would seem to come from the time previous to 701 B. C.

"then shall.....men." The relation of these men to the Messiah is unexplained. They may be helpers of the Messiah just as David had his chieftains to help him. J.M.P. Smith says that "shepherds" and "princes of men" are equivalent terms meaning military leaders.[1]

"the land of Assyria".

"the land of Nimrod" (v.6). Nimrod is a synonym for Assyria. The kingdom Nimrod, according to Hebrew legend, was at first Babylonia and was later extended to include Assyria.[2]

"in the entrances thereof." "in the gates thereof."

"and he.....Assyria." "He" probably refers to the Messiah who will rescue them from the Assyrian. The constant reference to the Assyrian makes it very probable that these verses are Micah's.

(3) The New Israel's attitude toward the other nations (vv.7-9).

"And the remnant of Jacob" (v.7). The idea of the remnant being preserved is common in Isaiah. Perhaps this is an evidence of the influence of Isaiah on Micah. "Jacob" is here used to denote "Judah."

"as dew".....as showers." This probably means that as the showers and dew refresh and are the life-givers to the plant life of Palestine, so Israel will be the teachers of the nations and give to them the things which are vital in the moral and religious sense.

"that tarry.....men." Just as the rain contains the life

1. See Micah (I C C), p. 109

2. See G. W. Wade, Micah (W C), p. 43

giving power for the grass that renders it independent of irrigation, so through the help of Yahweh the remnant will rise to power among the nations even if it does not have human help. Israel's hope for the future lies in Yahweh.[1]

"as a lion.....sheep" (v.8). Wild beasts as well as tame sheep are helpless before the lion. So Israel will be supreme among the nations in the days to come.

"who, if he.....deliver." This is a picture of the power of Israel to destroy and to subdue the nations.

"Let thine hand.....cut off" (v.9). This seems to be a prayer to Jahweh that the remnant may triumph over it's foes. The prophet assumes that Israel's foes are Jahweh's.

(4) Announcement of Jehovah's decision to cleanse the nation (vv.10-15).

Practically all scholars hold to this as being from the hand of Micah. It is in the spirit of the first three chapters. It does not refer to the "high places" as post-Deuteronomic writing would. The mention of the horses and chariots probably refers to the reliance upon such things from Egypt which Isaiah condemned. (Isa. 30:16; 31:1). The worship of Asherim, of graven images, and of pillars, and the practice of soothsaying prevailed among the people (Isa. 2:6,8; 10:10).

"I will.....chariots" (v.10). The prophet regards horses and chariots, which they probably procured from Egypt as hateful to Yahweh as idolatry. In the future the people will not trust in military defenses but to the protection of Yahweh.

"And I will.....strongholds." (v.11). Cities and strongholds are probably synonymous. There were a lot of fortified cities in the time of Hezekiah. Sennacherib testifies (Taylor Cylinder) to this fact:

1. See J.M.P. Smith, Micah (I C C), p. 112

"but as for Hezekiah of Judah, who had not submitted to my yoke, forty-six of his strong walled cities, and the smaller cities round about them, without number,.....I besiege and captured."[1] Yahweh will teach Israel complete dependence upon him by destroying her fortifications.

"And I will.....soothsayers" (v. 12). "witchcrafts" is probably better rendered "sorcery." There was very much of this among the old Semitic world. "out of thy hand," suggests that the sorcerers used something material such as drugs or herbs to produce magical effects or it may mean that they used divining objects such as rods and crystals. "soothsayers" probably denotes those who practice the acts of divination.

"and I will.....of thee." (v. 13). Graven images are meant, such as we find in early Israel. "pillars" were considered by the early Hebrews as the abodes of deity. They were unhewn stones, often set up beside altars, or at graves. The idea of the god dwelling in a stone goes back to early Semitic peoples.

"and thou.....hands." This does away with all images and objects of worship. The prophets had to fight continually against idolatry and they succeeded in stamping it out finally.

"And I will.....of thee" (v. 14). The Asherah was a sacred wooden post that was a part of the equipment of the place of worship. The Hebrews probably borrowed the customs connected with the asherim from the Canaanites. The use of the asherim was forbidden by the Deuteronomic Code (Dt. 7:5; 12:3; 16:21). These however survived their prohibition as did images. The nature of the origin and function of these asherim is not as yet known. They may have been survivals of tree-worship.

1. Quoted by J.M.P. Smith, Micah (I C C), p. 115

"and I will.....cities." "Cities" probably means adversaries. Jehovah will punish the other nations as well as Israel.

"And I will.....hearkened not." All nations will be punished by Jehovah if they do not listen to his commands.

c. Denunciation of Social Evils and the Coming Retribution (6:1-7:6).

1. The date

The date of this section was dealt with under the first section, on the period of Micah's activity. It comes in the early part of the seventh century (c. 692-690) in the first years of the reign of Manassah.

2. The Divisions.

a. Jahweh's complaint against Israel's ingratitude and indifference (vv.1-5).

"Hear ye.....saith." (v. 1). The prophet is here introducing Yahweh to the people and calls their attention to his words. Micah here is very sure that what he says is Jehovah's words and that he is to act as an advocate between God and Israel.

"Arise, contend.....voice." Yahweh is here speaking to the prophet. The mountains here are personified as judges. They have witnessed all of Jehovah's good gifts to Israel and the indifference and ingratitude on Israel's part. The prophet is here presenting Jahweh's side to the people and the mountains are to decide the case. The prophet feels that inanimate things are as much concerned with God's dealings as are the animate.

"Hear, O ye.....controversy" (v.2). The prophet now turns and speaks to the mountains. "The figure in the prophet's mind is that of a case in court; Yahweh is the plaintiff, Israel the defendant, the mountains serve as judge and jury, and the prophet is the plaintiff's counsel."[1]

1. Smith, J.M.P., Micah (I C C), p. 120

"and ye.....earth." The Hebrew use of the word for "enduring" is not real clear here. Most scholars favor this rendering: "Yea, give ear, O foundations of the earth." This makes the meaning clearer.

"For Jehovah.....Israel." "his people" suggests the special relation that Yahweh is supposed to have with Israel and it indicates the ground upon which Yahweh bases his right to enter into an argument with Israel (Judah). The appeal of the prophet is to right and truth and not to authority or emotion.

"O my people, what have.....thee" (v. 3). Jahweh leaves the way open for Israel to first give her complaints. The implication here is that Israel's attitude would be justifiable only on the basis of some mistreatment received at the hands of Yahweh. So Yahweh asks her to name something that will prove that he harmed her.

"and wherein.....thee." In what way have my demands been such as to warrant misconduct on Israel's part.

"For I brought thee up.....bondage" (v.4). Before Israel speaks Yahweh reminds them of his kind, watchful care over them in their past history. Israel has no place for complaint and every reason for gratitude.

"and I sent.....Miriam." These were the leaders of Jehovah who led the people as a shepherd leads his flock. This may be a later addition. Miriam seems to be given more prominence here than any where else as a leader.

"O my people.....him" (v.5). This is an allusion to the events recorded in Nu. 22-24. The prophet does not explain this but he presupposes their acquaintance with it. The writer wants to bring these great historical incidents to the minds of the people of Israel.

On this occasion Yahweh turned a would-be curse into a blessing.

"remember from.....Gilgal." There seems to have been an expression left out here. The allusion being to the crossing of the Jordan (subsequent to the incident of Balak and Balaam). Shittim was the place where the Israelites camped on the east bank of the Jordan River and Gilgal was the spot where they first encamped on the west side. Again the prophet calls to their minds the fatherly attitude which Jahweh has taken toward Israel.

"that ye may.....Jehovah." This summarizes what the incidents from history were intended to teach. If Israel could only realize her indebtedness to Jahweh she would certainly do his will.

b. The character of True Religion (vv.6-8).

"Wherewith shall I.....God?" (v.6). The prophet wishes by these questions to show the absurdity of the popular conception of Yahweh and his demands. This question arises out of the conception of God as a mighty king to whom his subjects must bring presents when they would approach his presence, (see Is.6:2ff.; 10:3f.; 25:27; 25. 16:1f.; also see Ex. 23:15 and 34:20). There was a commercial side to this that was carried on by the leaders without regard for morals (see Is. 1:15,23; 28:7,8; Amos 4:1; 5:7;10-12; Ho. 6:6-10; Jer. 5:1ff.; 9:1-6).

"Shall I come.....year old?" Calves were eligible for sacrifice from the age of seven days on (Lev. 22:27). A yearling was the requirement in the case of the Passover sacrifice (Ex. 12:5) and of other certain offerings (Lev. 9:3; Num. 15:27).

"will Jehovah be.....oil" (v.7). Oil was used in all meal offerings (Lev. 2:1,2,4-7; 7:10,12), and so was needed for the sacrifices Ex. 29:2,23,40; Lev. 6:15,21; Num. 8:8. The prophet uses

big terms here probably to show the exaggeration to which such things lead. The prophet is trying to show that these things are unnecessary in the eyes of Jehovah.

"shall I give.....soul?" Human sacrifice was an early custom among the Hebrews but it seems to have gained greatest prominence in the reign of Manassah. (See: the law of the redemption of the first-born (Ex. 13:3); the story of the contemplated sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. 22:13); Jephthah's vow (Jer. 11:34ff.); the sacrifice of the sons of Ahaz (2 Kings 16:3) and Manassah (2 Kings 21:2ff). The prophet here apparently wants to show that such an external practice is not a part of real religion. Nevertheless he sees that the people are willing to give their greatest treasure to Yahweh, hence his depth of feeling and sympathy towards the people.

"He hath showed.....god" (v. 8). The foregoing questions are answered by inference in the negative, he now calls their attention to a positive statement.

"what does.....thee." The "good" is associated with the will of Yahweh. Religion furnishes the dynamic for ethics. The prophet wishes to show here the character of true religion.

"but to do justly,.....God." There is nothing absolutely new here. The prophet is here emphasizing something that has already been said in Israel. Amos had developed Jahweh's insistence upon justice; Hosea had proclaimed the virtues of love and mercy; and humility before God was expounded by Isaiah. "It is nevertheless, a great saying surpassed by nothing in the Old Testament and by little in the New. It lays hold of the essential elements in religion and, detaching them from all else, sets them in clear relief. It links ethics with piety, duty toward men with duty toward God, and makes them both coequal factors in

religion."[1]

c. The Denunciation of the Crimes of the City (vv.9-16).

"The voice.....city." (v. 9). The city here referred to is Jerusalem. He is calling their attention to what Jahweh has to say.

"and the man.....name." This is a very difficult passage. The Hebrew construction is not quite clear. Some render it, 'well advised is he that seeth (or feareth) thy name' (Driver); or 'wisdom is it to fear thy name.' This requires no change in the text (i.e. the consonants), but merely of one of the vowel-points. Cheyne thinks, however, that the corruption of the text is deeper than that.[2]

"hear ye, the rod.....it." Again we run into a difficult phrase. "rod" here must refer to the Assyrian. "the one who appointed it" is Jahweh. But this translation involves some textual difficulties and scholars prefer: "Hear, O tribe, and the assembly of the city." Judah here is the "tribe" addressed, and "the assembly of the city" refers to the general meeting of the citizens of Jerusalem at which the problems pertaining to the city are brought up. At least we may say that the prophet is trying to awaken the city to it's own sins and the judgment that will follow if they do not change their ways.

"Are there yet.....wicked" (v.10), or as some scholars think it better rendered: "Can I forget (or can I overlook) the treasures in the house of the wicked." The unjust gains of the wicked always arise as a reminder of the sins of the city and render it impossible for Yahweh to be gracious.

1. Smith, J.M.P., Micah (I C C), p. 127

2. Cheyne, T. K., Micah (Camb. Bible), p. 52

"and a scant.....abominable." The rich cheated the poor by giving scant measures. There was no way of enforcing certain standards of measure and therefore there was probably a lot of injustice (see Amos 8:5; Dt. 25:14). But Yahweh's curse is upon all such dealings (Dt. 25:16) - he demands justice and equality.

"Shall I be pure....weights" (v. 11). Yahweh is trying to point out the utter impossibility of letting wickedness go unpunished. Can God hold a man to be pure if he uses deceitful weights?

"For the rich.....violence." The charge against the rich is that they have procured their riches at the expense of the poor (see Amos 3:10; 6:3; Zp. 1:9, Ez. 7:23; 8:17; Is. 59:6).

"and the.....lies." The prophet apparently spares no one, rich or poor, in his condemnation of falsehood. The poor were not free from sin either.

"and their.....mouth." Nothing that they say can be trusted.

"Therefore I also.....wound" (v.13). Jehovah pronounces judgement upon the city because of wickedness.

"Thou shalt eat.....satisfied" (v. 14). There will be a shortage of food along with the besieging of the city.

"and thy.....thee." "humiliation" should probably be rendered "emptiness." The real meaning of this phrase, however, is obscure.

"thou shalt put away.....sword." The first part of this apparently refers to possessions and the later part to persons.

"Thou shalt sow, but shalt not reap" (v.15). The harvest of the crops will be prevented by the advance of the enemy.

"thou shalt tread.....oil." This is the only direct reference to treading out olive-oil. The finest oil was beaten (Ex. 27:20; Lv. 24:2). The bulk of olive crop, however, was trodden out into oil vats,

The prophet is saying that before they get to use the oil that they have produced the city will be destroyed. There is a similar reference in the next phrase to the treading out of wine and it's use.

"For the statutes of Omri are kept" (v. 16). "Statutes" is used here in a religious sense meaning ceremonies or rules of worship (see 2 K. 17:34; Lv. 22:7,8). Omri is supposed to have been one of the worst kings of Israel. He is condemned by the Deuteronomist (I K. 16: 25f.) as one who broke the laws of Jehovah and as being worse than all of the kings that were before him. From the offences listed in vv.10-12 it would seem as though "the statutes of Omri" are to be interpreted by "the works of the house of Ahab," Which probably refers to the judicial murder of Naboth (I K. 21), as typical of the methods used by the rich in the time of Ahab.[1]

(These references seem to point to the time of the reign of Manassah. The conclusion was, in the section on the date, that Micah was the author of this section even though it seems to come late.)

"that I may.....desolation." The suggestion here is that those who committed the sins knew that they would have to suffer punishment. This is an old Hebrew principle.

"And the.....hissing." They will be the object of decision and they will have to bear the scorn of the heathen.

d. Israel's lament over her own condition (7:1-6).

"Woe is me" (v.1). The speaker here is not the prophet but the true Israel personified by the prophet.

"for I am.....the first ripe fig." Israel likens herself to one searching for fruit at the end of the fig harvest but finds none.

1. So G. W. Wade and J.M.P. Smith

The first figs of the season ripen near the beginning of June. These figs were greatly appreciated in early times (see Is. 28:4; Jer. 24:2; Hos. 9:10; Mk. 11:13).

"the godly man.....among men" (v.2). The "godly" and the "upright" are the grapes and figs. "earth" means Israel and not the whole world. The prophet is interested in his own nation and not in the world in general.

"They all lie.....blood." The rich took advantage of the poor and were under no legal restraint. The analogy used here is to that of a hunter.

"they hunt.....net." A hunter's net is probably referred to here. The greed of the people stops short of nothing.

"Their hands.....diligently" (v.3). The accused deliberately do evil, and that they do thoroughly.

"the prince.....reward." The prince demands a bribe and the judge judges for reward.

"and the great man.....soul." The rich men make known their wishes and the judges put them into effect. Judgement was for sale to the highest bidder.

"thus they weave it together." The rich and the judges work together against the poor.

"The best is.....thorn hedge" (v.4). "Thorn" in the Old Testament is a symbol of sin and it's effects. These men who should have protected the people were as thorns, harming them.

"the day.....is come." The day of Jahweh is in the mind of the prophet. The "watchmen" are the prophets and the "day of thy watchmen" is the day of Yahweh; or the day of judgement which the prophets forsaw.

"now shall be their perplexity." When the day of Jahweh comes it will be a day of bewilderment created by the retribution imposed by God.

"Trust ye.....friend" (v.5). The prophet proceeds from the friend in general to the most intimate friend and says do not trust anyone, not even a bosom friend.

"keep the doors.....bosom." The prophet here is not trying to slur womanhood but to bring out the universal faithlessness.[1]

"For the son.....father." This was a grevious offence in the eyes of the Semites.

"the daughter riseth.....mother." The daughter was under stricter rules than the son. The daughter's hand was given out by the father. Therefore the offense of a daughter was worse than that of the son.

"the daughter-in-law.....mother-in-law." The story of Ruth and Naomi reveals to us the ideal relationship between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law according to the Hebrews. The mother was granted complete authority over the son's wife.

"a man's enemies.....house." A man's nearest relatives and his own family were his enemies.

e. The ultimate settlement of the controversy (vv.7-20).

At verse six the thread of thought is broken and verse seven begins something altogether new. Wellhausen says that between v.6 and v.7 there yawns a century.[2] The speaker still appears to be the true Israel but here she seems to have already been defeated. In verses

1. Smith, J.M.P., Micah (ICC), p. 143

2. Gray, G. B., A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 220

1-6 the judgement of Jehovah is in the future. C. B. Gray says that what was present in 7:1-6, i.e. moral disorder and confusion in the existing Jewish state is in 7:7-20 past. The retribution of 7:4b has come to pass, and has been continuing for some time.[1] In this section consolation is the main object of the prophet, while in vv.1-6 it is one of warning of a coming calamity.

Israel speaks in penitence in vv.7-20, She realizes her sin, and bows herself to the consequences, but in the hope that Jehovah will save her. In the future there will come a time when Jehovah will reassemble his people and they along with all other nations will recognize him as their God.

The actual date of this passage is much in doubt. Scholars are generally agreed that it comes from a later time than that of Micah but they are not at all agreed as to the actual date. Ewald and Driver assign this to the times of Manasseh. This does not exclude Micah's authorship, but Ewald holds that it was written by a younger and anonymous prophet. Wellhausen goes further and sets the date of the writing in post-exilic times. G.A. Smith thinks that all of these have missed the main point of evidence by overlooking the fact that Bashan and Gilead, the provinces overrun by Tiglath-Pileser in 734, are mentioned rather than Samaria and Zion. He thinks that vv.7-20 is a psalm composed of little pieces from various dates. He opposes the late date except for v. 11 which he says comes from the exile.[2]

1. Gray, G. B., A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament, p.220

2. See G. A. Smith, The Book of the Twelve Prophets, Vol. 1, pp.373-374. New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1896

G. W. Wade[1] says that of these 14 verses could not have come from the same period. He assigns vv.7-10 to the time of the exile; vv.11-13 to the period whortly before the time of Nehemiah, who arrived at Jerusalem from Persia in 445 and began the rebuilding of the walls; 14-20 he assigns to a period after the exile, probably in the fifth century.

(The dates of the different sections will be considered more definitely as each section is dealt with.)

(1) The people in exile place their hope in Jehovah (vv.7-10). This section suggests extreme humiliation of the people and it presupposes that they are in exile. These verses date from the period 587-537 B. C.

"But as for me,.....hear me" (v.7). The speaker here is the oppressed community, which expresses its undying faith in Yahweh as the one who will deliver Israel. "look unto" is better rendered "look for". "wait for." The same verb is translated "hope in" by the R.V. in Ps. 38:15; 42:5; 43:5. "the God of my salvation". This would be better "the God of my deliverance."

"Rejoice.....enemy" (v.8). Enemy is collective here and means all of Israel's foes. For this ironic rejoicing cf. Ps. 35:19,24; 38:16; Ob. 12.

"when I fall, I shall arise." This is an expression of enduring faith. They are so certain of final vindication that Israel is saying, "though I have fallen, I shall arise."

"when I sit....unto me." "Darkness" and "light" are common figures for calamity and prosperity. The "light" is Jehovah's promise

1. See G. W. Wade, Micah (W C), p. 61-63

expressed to the people through the prophets.

"I will bear.....Jehovah" (v.9). The Jewish people, due to the words of the prophets, always felt that calamity was due to the divine wrath. Here they felt that Jehovah was using a heathen nation as an instrument of his wrath.

"I have sinned against him." Israel realizes that it was her sin that aroused the divine anger.

"until he.....for me." Jahweh although he used a heathen nation to punish Israel will come to rescue Israel because she is more righteous than these other nations.

"he will bring.....righteousness." The prophet's taught the righteousness of Jahweh to the people of Israel. It would be unrighteous for Yahweh to allow a heathen nation to destroy Israel without his intervention. Israel was more in accordance with his will than the other nations. Therefore they expected God to save them and punish their oppressors.

"Then mine enemy.....her." Israel's vindication would not be complete if her enemies were not put to shame. Israel had long suffered the insults of her enemies, but Jehovah would crush them and save her.

"Where is Jehovah thy God?" This is derisive expression indicative of Jahweh's powerlessness (see 2 K. 18:34; Joel 2:17; Ps. 79:10; 115:2). Among peoples believing that gods were interested in particular nations only, disasters were naturally attributed to the weakness of the patron deity.

"Mine eyes....streets." She who doubted the power of Jehovah will not realize that he is not powerless but all-powerful. Jehovah will crush her as he allowed Israel to be.

(2) The restoration of Jerusalem and the return of the exiles (vv.11-13).

The prophet conveys the word of Jehovah promising that the walls of Jerusalem will be rebuilt and that the people who are still in exile are to return.

The "terminus a quo" for the origin of this section is the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B. C.; the "terminus ad quem" is the year of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem under Nehemiah (c. 445). The prophet apparently pictures the rebuilding to be near at hand, so it is altogether possible that it could have been written just before the period of Nehemiah.

"A day.....walls (v.11). Jerusalem here is addressed. The prophet predicts a time when the walls of Jerusalem will be rebuilt.

"in that day.....removed." "decree" is better rendered "boundary." This suggests that Israel will have extensive territory. This has been interpreted in various ways but this seems to be the best.[1]

"In that day.....Egypt" (v.12). This is not a prediction of invasion, nor a promise of the conversion of the nations; but an assurance of the return of the exiles.[1] The Jews were scattered over Egypt, Babylonia, and Assyria.

"from Egypt....river." The river referred to is the Euphrates.

"and from sea.....mountain." This is probably just an expression to convey vastness of expanse. If definite geographical things are referred to then what is meant is probably the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf, and the mountains of Abyssinia and Armenia.

"Yet shall the land.....doings." The land here threatened cannot be Canaan; but must be the heathen world in general. It must suffer for its unjust deeds.

1. So J.M.P. Smith and T. K. Cheyne

(3) A prayer for Yahweh's Intervention.

This section reflects a time when the Jewish people were a small and depressed body, conscious of their sinful past, surrounded by aliens, and longing for a renewal of the happier times of long ago when they had more territory.[1] The return from the exile seems to lie in the past. The people are in Canaan but their territory is small. All of this suggests a time in the post-exilic age, probably in the fifth century.

"Feed thy people.....heritage" (v.14). Yahweh is addressed as the shepherd of Israel. Israel is represented as Yahweh's "inheritance," in Deuteronomy and subsequent writings.

"which dwell.....Carmel." The Jewish nation is isolated and closely encompassed by her enemies. She is occupying the hill-tops of Judah, but is denied the more fertile plain round about which her enemies possess.

"let them feed.....old." The prophet here prays restoration of former glory and asks that Israel be allowed to once more occupy all of its previous territory even to the east of the Jordan.

"as in the days.....things" (v.15). Some[2] scholars consider this the answer to the prophet's prayer that he will do for them in the immediate future what he did at the time of the Exodus. Others[3] hold that this is a continuation of the prayer of the prophet asking Jehovah to miraculously intervene in behalf of Israel. The latter

1. See G. W. Wade, Micah (W C), p. 62
2. So G. W. Wade and T. K. Cheyne
3. So J.M.P. Smith and R. F. Horton

seems to be the most probably interpretation.

"The nations.....might." Then there supposed power would seem very weak in comparison to that of Yahweh.

"they shall....mouth." They shall keep silence because of astonishment and terror.

"their ears shall be deaf." They shall also lose their hearing because of the thunderings of Jehovah's power.

"They shall.....earth" (v.17). This is a figure of utter abasement; cf. Ps. 72:9; Is. 49:23. There should be a break at the end of "earth."

"they shall.....places." To which they have fled in terror.

"They shall come.....thee." Those who have long jeered at Jawheh now are afraid and tremble before him.

"Who is a .....thee." (v.18). The power of Yahweh is expressed in vv. 15-17 and is a background for this statement. There is no God like unto Yahweh in the mind of the prophet (See Ex. 15:11, Ps. 71:19; 77:14; 86:8; 89:7,9; 96:4; 97:9).

"that pardoneth.....transgression." This is a common thought in the Psalms (see Ps. 86:5,15; 99:8; 103:3,13; 130:4).

"of the remnant.....heritage." This is probably a gloss which limits God's forgiving spirit to Israel.

"he retaineth...lovingkindness." This thought is also very often expressed in the Psalter (See Ps. 25:10; 30:6; 32:10; 33:5; 34:9; 57:4,11).

"He will.....us" (v.19). Israel's past experience with Yahweh warrants this expectation for the future.

"he will.....foot." The sins of Israel are here poetically pictured as Israel's enemies which Yahweh will subdue.

"And thou wilt.....sea." The prophet emphasizes the fact that Yahweh will forgive Israel and restore her to her past glory and power.

"Thou wilt.....Abraham" (v.20). God was gracious once to Israel's ancestors, he will be gracious to his people in the future. (The names of the forefathers are here applied to their descendants).

"which thou.....old." This refers probably to Gen. 22:16ff. and 28:13f., and in general to all the promises through patriarchs and prophets through Israel's history.

CHAPTER III

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we will be concerned with the message of the book of Micah as a whole. As the book is found in our Bible it is made up of a collection of many short prophecies coming from various periods in the life of Micah. There are two sections (4:1-5 and 7:7-20) that are not original with Micah but which are not too foreign to his attitude and spirit to be considered along with his utterances. We will therefore deal with the message of the complete book.

The social conditions which Micah faced were similar to those with which Amos had to deal. Therefore we see a similarity in their messages. There is one note which we catch in Micah's prophecies that is lacking in the words of Amos, that is the personal touch and sympathetic feeling for the people. Micah seems to have a more intimate contact with the people; he knows whereof he speaks. He himself may have been affected. Perhaps he senses the hardship of the peasants because he shares in their trouble. At least we know: "Himself a peasant, he becomes the spokesman of peasants."[1]

Micah was a man of impressionable character and strong emotions. He was aroused easily by the sight of wrong. This spirit, coupled with the actual witnessing of the scenes of oppression in the country places, made his spirit burn with indignation.

1. Smith, J. M. P., Micah (I C C), p. 23

The prophet has a passionate sympathy for his people. In 3:3 and 1:9 he calls them "my people," identifying himself with their troubles. This spirit of compassion is seen at various places throughout the book. In 6:7b Micah, even though he condemns child sacrifice, feels deeply for those who give "the fruit of their body" for the sin of their soul.

Micah does not speak in terms of emotion or in irrational terms. He speaks not on the grounds of authority. He appeals to them on the grounds of reason 6:2ff. It was not a question of forcing the people to accept certain beliefs because he spoke them. He appeals to the mountains to judge the case between Israel and Jehovah and both sides present their case. Jehovah then reminds them of what he has done for them all through their past history. The prophet now speaks as personifying Israel and asks: "Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, etc." (6:6-8). Micah at times seems to condemn the rich without mercy but as we examine his prophecies as a whole we say that he was as fair as anyone could be in a similar situation especially if he had such a prophetic spirit as Micah's.

Micah, as were all of the true prophets, was absolutely sure that what he said was the "word of Jehovah" (see 3:5; 6:1,9). He was sure that Jehovah had called him to be a prophet. He is so confident of this that he represents Jehovah as speaking in person to the people of Israel. However, "he left not record of the experiences that made him a prophet, for he scorned all external attestations of his authority, and relied solely on the manifestations of the Spirit and of Power."[1] His prophecy justifies his claim to speak in the power and

1. Bewer, Julius A., The Literature of the Old Testament in its Historical Development, p. 118, New York: Columbia University Press, 1922

inspiration of God (see 3:8).

Micah prophesied, not because he felt compelled to, but because he was motivated by his own righteousness within. "The truths enunciated by the prophet were not things imposed upon him from without, but the choicest possession of his own inner spirit, the product of his own divinely illuminated experience, observation, and meditation upon the practical problems of life."[1] Cheyne suggests that Micah, as well as the other prophets, did not cease to be men when they received inspiration from God. They seem to have a double consciousness, uniting them on the one hand with God, and on the other with the people. Hence the abrupt transitions from stern denunciations to the spirit of tender compassion.[2]

There was no one thing that gave Micah so much courage to speak out against the evils of society and to preach the destruction of Jerusalem as did his conviction that he was called of God. How could such a peasant speak out as he did, except that God be on his side? Micah was constantly treading on dangerous territory. To preach the destruction of Samaria, Jerusalem and the Temple was no small matter. Yet this "minor prophet" spoke the truth without swerving. He held to his convictions even in the face of danger. He risked his life for his people. In this man we see a true prophetic spirit that knows of nothing but to plead for the right as the cause of God and his people.

THE FALSE PROPHETS

Since Micah was the type of prophet that he was the contrast between him and the false prophets was even more marked. Micah spoke what he felt to be the truth. He was interested in righteousness and

1. Smith, J.M.P., Micah (I C CO),p. 77

2. Quoted: Horton, R. F. (N C B), p. 230

godliness and not in narrow nationalism. When his own nation violated the laws and principles of Jahweh he predicted that God would punish them. He never said nice things about his nation ~~even though~~ WHEN it sinned. The prophets knew no such petty nationalism. They appealed to the eternal laws of the universe as the judge of all nations.

The other prophets at the time of Micah were popular because they prophesied good things for Israel in spite of her sin. They were a sleek, self-satisfied group of official prophets. Like their forebearers in the days of Ahab (I K. 22) they seemed to think that their task was to salve the consciences of the corrupt rulers and to commend their policies so as to receive their public approval. They had no social or religious ideals; they were mere instruments in the hands of the state. "The contrast between them and Micah was the eternal contrast between the mercenary priesthood and the true prophet."[1] (Micah felt this contrast very deeply; cf. 2:11, 3:5-7). The cleft between the lower and the higher types of prophecy began at least as early as the days of Micaiah Ben Imlah (I K. 22) and grew wider with each succeeding generation.

Micah, as well as the other prophets were bidden by the false prophets to hold their peace (see Amos 5:10; 7:12; Isa. 28:9,10; 30:9,10). Here we see the germs which later developedinto persecution at the time of Manasseh (2 K. 21:16). The faithful prophets were sometimes obliged to hide themselves (Isa. 30:20), and it seemed as if "the godly man had perished out of the land" (Mic. 7:2).

Micah condemns the false prophets because they prophesied only ✓ that which made them popular (2:11). They were not interested in

1. Kent, C. F., The Social Teachings of the Prophets and Jesus, p. 73 New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930

helping the poor people of Judah but they rather made "war against them." They were not prophesying because they had convictions that were inspired of God but because it was a profitable business (3:11). "Yet they lean upon Jehovah, and say, Is not Jehovah in the midst of us? no evil shall come upon us." Over against this attitude "The true prophet, in the face of opposition and isolation, remained certain that he only was the interpreter of the will of God."[1]

THE PROPHET OF THE POOR

Micah was a prophet of the people. He, himself a man of a small town, had a great deal of love and sympathy for the common people. His message was inspired mainly by the wrong done to the poor people of the land. In this prophet the spirit of Amos comes to life again in all of it's intensity and vigor. Isaiah deals more with the political policy of Judah and he spoke of the folly of the king's trust in Assyria. But Micah scourges the avarice of the land-owner and the injustice which oppresses the peasant. Isaiah was not blind to the oppression of the poor, and neither was Micah blind to the affairs of the capital. However, Micah's great prophetic interest is centered in his people. The social wrongs are always felt more acutely in the country than in the city.

George Adam Smith[2] says that the social changes of the eighth century in Israel were peculiarly favorable to it's growth. The enormous increase of money which had been produced by the trade of Uzziah's reign threatened the structure of Judah. It was this sort of thing which brought out class consciousness and widened the breach

1. Smith, J.M.P., Micah (I C C), p. 74

2. Smith, G. A., The Twelve Prophets, p. 388
New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1901

between the rich and the poor. The rich absorbed more and more land at the expense of the poor. Isaiah had cried, "Woe upon them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no more room" for the common people (Isa. 5:8). Micah's reaction to this situation is seen in 2:1-2: It lies "in the power of their hands" to oppress the poor. But the judgment of Jahweh will be upon them for their sin. Their punishment will take the form of a conquest of the land by the heathen, and the disposal of these estates to the foreigner.

C. F. Kent[1] says that Judah had reached its lowest social degradation at this time. True brotherhood and genuine patriotism had almost vanished even from the hearts of the common people. Selfish blatant materialism was regnant. Israel's noble social ideals had been ignored and destroyed.

Micah counteracts this social corruption with the insistence upon the holiness of Yahweh and the righteousness of his law and government. Any nation, to Micah, who allowed such injustice to reign was due for punishment. Some may say that Micah had a view of God as One who practiced strict retributive justice. We will have to admit that Micah's view of God was far different from that of Jesus, and yet Micah was not far wrong when he, in essence, insisted that the nation that did evil would finally be punished.

Micah sees the sin of the nations to be centered in the large cities, especially Samaria and Jerusalem. He had only one story to tell of them and that was doom. He predicted in no uncertain terms the destruction of the capital of his own nation. Not only would it be destroyed but the hill whereon the city stood would become an utter waste.

1. Kent, C. F., Social Teachings of the Prophets and Jesus, p. 72

First of all the prophet announces the coming of Jehovah (1:3). He will come and "tread upon the high places of the earth." All of nature will be effected by his coming (1:4). Because of the transgression of Samaria and Jerusalem (1:5) will Jehovah "make Samaria as a heap of the field, and as places for planting vineyards" (1:6). Along with the destruction of the city will go the destruction of the idols (1:7).

Micah feels deeply this destruction that is to come to his land. "For this will I lament and wail; I will go stripped and naked; I will make a wailing like the jackals, and a lamentation like the ostriches" (1:8). He saw no escape from this doom (her wounds are incurable, 1:9), and even Jerusalem will be destroyed.

Micah compares the rulers who oppress the people to cannibals (3:1-4). The rich were so greedy that they laid in their beds devising evil and iniquity so that they may take more land from the poor. Instead of protecting the people as they should they preyed upon them.

"Micah was stung to the quick by their callous greed and cruelty, and inveighed against them in rasping tones," softened only by short prophecies of hope of the future triumph of Jerusalem."[1] His straightforward and lively sense of justice suffered itself to be neither silenced nor repressed."[2] His moral indignation overpowers him as he sees the oppression of the poor and he saw only one result of their avarice, that was the destruction of Jerusalem. "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem

1. Gordon, Alex. R., The Prophets of the Old Testament, p. 137
London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1916

2. Cornill, Carl Heinrich, The Prophets of Israel, p. 69

shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest" (3:12).

C. F. Kent[1] says that Micah was one of the few prophets who made a definite immediate impression upon the social life of his nation. Hezekiah instituted a reform (II K. 18:4-6) which may have been partly due to the teachings of Micah. To be sure, this reform dealt more with types of worship than with social justice. We may draw, however, from Jer. 26 that Micah's teachings went deeper than mere ceremony. Therefore, we may say that Micah's influence can be seen in the reform but that he was more thorough in the demands of God than were the reformers. He aroused the social conscience of the people as Isaiah failed to do. This was not due to the fact that he had a greater message or was more original but because he held the point of view of the common people and spoke with simplicity and vigor and behind his teachings was the enforcing power of the political situation.

Not only were the political leaders corrupt but even the religious leaders were the partners of the rich. They prostituted their high calling for the sake of material gain (3:11). They made a mockery of religion by standing with the rich and powerful in the oppression of the poor. "They whose duty it is to expose sin cast over it the cloak of religion, and wax rich."[2]

Micah was a shining light in the grim social, political, and religious life of the people. When even the men who are allied with religion become corrupt then something is going to happen. There is

1. Kent, C. F., Social Teachings, p. 74
2. Smith, J.M.P., (I C C), p. 25

always someone who is willing to face opposition and scorn for that which is right. Micah was such a man. "Micah, standing almost alone in an unpopular cause, dared to denounce the vested interests of his day."[1]

THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH OF JERUSALEM

Micah's message was primarily one of doom but not entirely so. He predicted the destruction of Jerusalem because of the sins of the rulers; but he held to the ultimate triumph and future glory of Jerusalem. Micah did not feel as though the people would change radically so as to avoid this coming punishment. He predicted the destruction by which Jerusalem would be purged of the wicked and from which a purified remnant would be saved. The new Israel was to be built upon this remnant and it would enjoy permanent peace and prosperity (4:6,7). The future dominion of Israel is also to be restored (4:8) and Jehovah is to reign over it forever (4:7). Through the moral influence of the remnant the knowledge of Yahweh would spread to the other nations of the earth.

Israel's enemies were to be subdued. They do not understand Yahweh's plans but he "hath gathered them as sheaves on the threshing-floor" (4:12). He then commands Israel to arise and "thresh" for He has given her the power to subdue her enemies (4:13).

There is also to be a religious reformation in Israel in which all horses, chariots, fenced cities, strongholds, witchcrafts, soothsayers, images, pillars, and all idolatry will be destroyed out of the land (5:10-15). Micah hated idolatry and superficiality in worship. Therefore he gives the demands of Jehovah as Justice, mercy, and humility (6:8). Israel had too long approached God with offerings of

1. Smith, J.M.P., (I C C), p. 25

oil and animals (6:6,7). The new Israel was to be one which did not depend upon superficialities in worship.

Micah believed that Jahweh would assemble all of the dispersed Jews (7:12) in Jerusalem and that Jerusalem would become the religious center of the world. All nations would bring their disputes to Jahweh at Jerusalem and they would all abide by his decision. All instruments of warfare would be destroyed and the nations would not "learn war any more" (4:1-3). "But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of Jahweh of hosts hath spoken it" (4:4).

Before this, however, the nation must be purified (6:9-16). The sins of the people must be punished. This, the prophet thinks, will bring the true Israel to see her sin and she will be sorrowful (7:1-5). Israel must go forth to the field but there she will be rescued (4:10).

Micah's message of hope is similar to Isaiah's. He believes that a new and better Israel will result from the purification process which will take place. This was only a hope but it was characteristic of the prophets. They did not expect Jahweh, a righteous God, to allow Israel to be permanently destroyed by the heathen when Israel was a more religious nation than the others.

THE MESSIAH

Micah says that Yahweh will be the ruler of Israel and of the world. He also seems to expect an earthly ruler who will be God's representative. He does not say how these two rulers are to govern but he does say that Jahweh will furnish strength for this ruler (5:4). Micah may have finally come to the conclusion that it would be an earthly ruler, a representative of Yahweh, who would rule over Israel

rather than Yahweh Himself.

This Messianic ruler is to come out of Bethlehem, a very small town among the towns of Judah (5:2). This ruler is to be a second David. He does not mean that the Messiah will come out of the Davidic line which had reigned in Judah since David. If he had meant that, the new ruler would naturally have had to come out of Jerusalem. He expressly differentiates the Messianic king from the actual representatives of David's dynasty at the time being. The circumstances of his birth are obscured in mysterious language. His mother appears to be the community (5:3; 4:9,10).

This Messiah is not to be a descendant of David. He is not to continue David's work but to begin all over again. He is not called king but ruler. This ruler is to be a man of the people, raised up to free his country from the invader. The military power of Israel is to be recognized by all nations.

It is logical that Micah, brooding on the needs of humanity, came to the idea of a Messiah. He was probably influenced by Isaiah in this belief also. It is natural that Micah should have pictured him as coming from the small town of Bethlehem and being a man of the people. Micah never expected much good to come out of Jerusalem. This hope, that someday Jahweh would raise up a ruler who would be representative of his people, was an expression of Micah's inner life and hope. He expected God to justify the wrongs done to the poor.

MICAH'S GOD

In spite of the preaching of Amos and Hosea Israel still cherished an illusion the key to which is given in 3:11. They had the wrong conception of God and his demands of men. It was Micah's

task to open the eyes of the blind and unseal the ears of the deaf. They felt that they were the chosen people and therefore how could disaster befall them? This made the relation between Israel and her God unconditioned by high demands. This conception was held by heathen nations. But never did the prophets think of God in such a narrow way. Micah shows the people's belief in God in spite of the corruptness of their lives (3:9-11). It was the task of the prophets to denounce and expose sin and to hold up in contrast with it the higher conceptions of God and duty. "The God whom Micah worships is no petty national God committed unconditionally to the support of his own people, but a God who can be so provoked by sin as to hurl them to destruction."[1] Jahweh was a God, who, to Micah, could win glory for himself without the temple and Jerusalem. He was so powerful as to make the mountains quake (1:4) and did not need Jerusalem to vindicate himself in the eyes of the world. "He is not a mere law of retribution working in history, but is a personal God, who remains still the loving Father, even when He can only teach His children by stern discipline, suffering and sorrow."[2]

Micah believes God's power to be over all nations and therefore he is a universal God. Micah addresses all the nations of the earth in 1:2. All nations are to hear what Jehovah has to say.

Micah's conception of God is not free from defects. Jehovah is a God who avenges wrong by imposing punishment upon the sinner. Micah knows nothing of forgiveness. He does believe, however, that God will overlook the sin of Israel (7:19). In spite of certain defects Micah is fundamentally right when he holds that God is righteous

1. McFadyen, J. E., Micah (A C), p. 793
2. Orchard, W. E., Oracles of God, p. 112

and holy and that he demands righteousness and justice from his people.

The greatest contribution made to the development of religion by Micah is his saying in 6:8. The people separated morality and religion and believed that God would be satisfied with sacrifices and offerings. Against this whole attitude the eighth century prophets set themselves resolutely. Micah as others tried to purify religion by elevating the conception of God. He emphasizes the true nature of Yahweh. He seeks justice, and mercy, and humility and not sheep and oxen (6:8). Micah brings out the ethical which had been pushed into the background by the people. Divine favor was not a matter of purchase at any price. It was a matter of striving after attainment of the divine ideals of righteousness and justice.

It is difficult for us to realize what a tremendous advance in religion the prophets made. Religion was centered in ritual and sacrifice. The great contrast between the popular and prophetic types or religion is shown in 6:6-8. "For the prophets religion meant individual piety. They repudiated the idea of tribal responsibility, of mediatorship and sacrifices, and, instead, set up as a standard for the individual a humble consciousness of God - for He is a 'present God' - and the moral obligation and desire to do what is just and right - for He is a 'holy God.'"[1] This marks a new era in the religious development of Israel.

McFadyen suggests that the important question to a religious man is, "What doth the Lord require of thee?" And the great answer is Micah 6:8. There were those who came before Jahweh with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old, with rams and with oil, some were even

1. Buttenwieser, Moses, The Prophets of Israel, p. 322

prepared to give their children. They failed to profit by the experiences of Abraham and Jephthah. They failed to see that he was not a God of blood. He does not want the blood of either man or beast, but right living.

The scientist Huxley has said of this passage: "A perfect ideal of religion! A conception of religion which appears to me as wonderful an inspiration of genius as the art of Phidias or the science of Aristotle."[1] Today this statement on religion appropriately stands inscribed on the statue of Religion in the Congressional Library in Washington.[1] This is probably the greatest statement in the Old Testament. In it we have the echoings of the preaching of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah.

1. Quoted by C. F. Kent, Social Teachings, p. 76

SUMMARY

MICAH, THE MAN

Since we have completed the interpretation of the book of Micah let us review briefly the ground we have covered. First, we considered Micah's background and environment, the period of his activity, his relation to Isaiah and his style of writing. We concluded from this study that, although we know very little about the man, we do know that he was the youngest of the prophets who prophecied in the period from Uzziah to Hezekiah; he came from the small country town of Moresheth, and had the view point of a country man. He sympathized with the common people and their problems. He saw the social and political evils and raised a righteous voice against them.

Religion had become a matter of form and ceremony and had lost its vitality. Micah, dominated by the consciousness of God, unreservedly proclaimed that Jahweh demanded justice, mercy and humility; anyone who failed to observe these fundamental principles of religion would meet the judgment of Jahweh.

We concluded, also, that Micah's activity extended over the period 725 - 690 B. C. Many scholars favor 701 B. C. as the date of the first prophecies of Micah. The majority of scholars, however, agree on 725 B. C., just before the fall of Samaria, as the beginning of Micah's ministry. There are convincing arguments on both sides but our conclusion was that Micah began prophesying in 725 B. C.

rather than 701 B. C. for Micah's earliest prophecies. The evidence points to the fact that Micah's prophetic activity extended to a time as late as c. 690 B. C. Again, however, we found various opinions among the scholars. Some of those who put the latest prophecies in the reign of Manassah say that the style of this is different from that of Chapters 1 - 3 and therefore not from the hand of Micah. We showed, however, that the difference in style could have been due to the difference in the situations which brought forth the utterances. The general point of view is the same in the later prophecies as it is in chapters 1 - 3. Therefore, our conclusion from all of the evidence is that Micah's activity extended from c. 725 B. C. to c. 690 B. C.

Micah's great contemporary was Isaiah, the prophet of the "sovereignty of God." Isaiah and Micah differed widely in their points of view. Isaiah was a man from the city and spoke from the point of view of a city-man. Micah was from the country and spoke from the opposite point of view. Nevertheless Isaiah had a definite influence upon his younger contemporary. Both of these prophets were "men of God" and proclaimed the great principles of religion.

Micah's style of writing was different from that of Isaiah. Isaiah shows great literary ability and is Israel's great prophet-writer. Micah does not attain the beauty of diction of Isaiah but is somewhat blunt. Nevertheless, we concluded that, Micah was a great prophet because he put his very life and soul into his prophecies.

THE DIVISIONS OF THE BOOK

In the second place we took up the divisions of the book of Micah. We found that the Book falls into three main sections,

chapters 1 - 3, 4 - 5, 6 - 7. Chapters 1 - 3 deal with "The Denunciation of Sin and the Coming Judgment." In this section Micah proclaims the doom of Israel because of her sins (1:2-7). He laments over the coming catastrophe (1:8-16), roused by the social sins explained in 2:1-11. In chapter 3:1-12 Micah continues his condemnation of the leaders and false prophets.

The second section (chapters 4-5) deals with "Promises of Hope and Future Glory." We found a great variety of opinion among scholars as to the date and authenticity of this section. Some say that none of it is Michan, others say that only parts of it came from Micah, and others hold vigorously to the genuineness of this section. Most of the opposition to these prophecies is based upon the sudden changes from messages of glory to those of doom and the claim that the things presupposed by Micah are foreign to his era. We concluded that the first objection loses its force when we realize that the pre-exilic prophets had hope for the preservation of a remnant and when we understand this to be a collection of prophecies coming from different times. This section does not consist in one unified discourse. The latter argument also loses its force when we realize that these prophecies were delivered at different times, under different circumstances, and growing out of a certain historical situation. The conclusion of this study was that these prophecies came from Micah and were brought forth by the danger of an Assyrian invasion. The date set for these prophecies was some time previous to the invasion of Assyria in 701 B. C.

This section begins with the picturization of the ideal world of the future (4:1-5). It deals with the restoration and healing of the dispersed (4:6-8), distress and redemption (4:9-10), the

deliverance of Jerusalem and the destruction of the enemy (4:11-13). Chapter five expresses the hope of the coming of the Messiah (5:1-15), and the denunciation of the social evils and the coming retribution (6:1-7:6).

The last small section, which we concluded was not from the hand of Micah, deals with "the ultimate settlement of the controversy. In this section we see no reference to the moral disorder and confusion of the previous chapters. The retribution of 7:4b has come to pass. Israel is speaking in penitence in vv. 7-20. She realizes her sin, and bows herself to the consequences, but in the hope that Jehovah will save her. We concluded that the parts of 7:7-20 were written at different times; vv. 7-10 at the time of the exile (587-537 B.C.); vv. 11-13 at a time previous to the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem (445 B. C.); vv. 14-20 in the post-exilic age, probably in the fifth century.

MICAH'S MESSAGE

"The prophet Micah marks no great epoch in the history of prophecy. He is not the apostle of any new teaching; he does but reiterate the great truths proclaimed by his predecessors. But he is no mere imitator; he has forged his message in the passion of his soul, and stamped upon it the impress of his own personality."[1] W. Nowack[2] says in Micah we see a depth of moral earnestness and intensity of genuine feeling such as are scarcely paralleled elsewhere. He links moral goodness with humanity.

Micah saw nothing ahead for the rich but destruction and exile.

1. Smith, J.M.P., (I C C), p. 23

2. Nowack, W., (H B D), p. 360

He did, however, cherish the hope that a purified remnant would again be reassembled in Jerusalem and that a ruler would come out of Bethlehem to rule over them and restore the former dominion of Israel.

We do not know the immediate effect of Micah's preaching but we do know that he made an impress upon his contemporaries. For, one hundred years after his denunciation, which stood in such glaring contradiction to the preaching of Isaiah, is not yet forgotten.[1] His words were cherished among the people of the land for whom he labored and his example of sturdy independence and freedom of speech is the name of Yahweh established a precedent that was of good service to Jeremiah, the prophet who had a similar message.

Micah was a man of great initiative and courage. "That Yahweh's temple, which had stood as a visible reminder of his presence since the days of Solomon, should pass into the hands of a pagan nation to be desecrated and destroyed was a statement altogether incredible to the citizens of Jerusalem, and one which only absolute and unswerving loyalty to Yahweh and his will could possibly have enabled Micah to make."[2] Micah claimed to be a prophet of Yahweh, from whom he received his power and courage.

Micah's recognition that social oppression is the cardinal sin gives him a burning message for our day. Social injustice is still prevalent in all parts of the world. The rich oppress the poor and very often they have the sanction of religion. "We need today men like Micah who see the facts and dare to speak the truth about them, in the name of God and in the scorn of consequences."[3] Micah is listed

1. Nowack, W., (H B D), p. 360
2. Smith, J.M.P., (I C C), p. 25
3. Thorn, G. W., The Prophets of Israel and Their Message for Today, p. 82

with the twelve "minor prophets." He was a "minor prophet," but we cannot deny after seeing his spirit of courage, his love of the common people, his high conception of the demands of God for men that he was a great "minor prophet."

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